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ANGLICAN-ROMAN CATHOLIC ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE:
A CASE FOR A RAHNERIAN LOGIC OF SYMBOL

A Dissertation

Submitted to McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Eric S. Dart

May 2016

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Eric S. Dart

2016

ANGLICAN-ROMAN CATHOLIC ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE:
A CASE FOR A RAHNERIAN LOGIC OF SYMBOL

By

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Approved March 30, 2016

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ABSTRACT

ANGLICAN-ROMAN CATHOLIC ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE A CASE FOR A RAHNERIAN LOGIC OF SYMBOL

By

Eric S. Dart

May 2016

Dissertation supervised by Fr. Radu Bordeianu, Ph.D.

This dissertation examines the ecumenical relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion and the necessity for a symbolic cognitive and narrative conversion in both communions. Drawing upon Karl Rahner's theology of symbol, this dissertation argues that such a cognitive and narrative conversion is determined by the interpretation and appropriation of God's mystery as the origin and goal of Christian activity and belief. As such, there is a demand for a second naïveté in both communions, whereby, the methods employed by ecumenical dialogue extend beyond the logic of criticism and seek to embrace a postcritical logic of symbol.

DEDICATION

For Becky, Ewan, and Declan

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Introduction

The impetus for the following pages developed out of a fascination with the complexities involved with Benedict XVI's apostolic letter, *Anglicanorum Coetibus*, which provides a corporate structure for groups of Anglicans to enter into communion with the Roman Catholic Church and the subsequent events that surrounded the development and eventual failure of the Anglican Covenant.

The complexities and issues surrounding both *Anglicanorum Coetibus* and the Anglican Covenant are strikingly similar to the complexities and issues that surround the present-day ecumenical dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion. *Anglicanorum Coetibus*, for instance, is both an affirmation of the ecumenical convergence that has developed between both communions since Vatican II, but it is also an undeniable rejection of the ontological validity of the Anglican Communion. In short, the apostolic letter, on the one hand, is an affirmation of the phenomenological validity of the Anglican Communion, but, on the other hand, denies its ontological validity. The events surrounding the Anglican Covenant, however, demonstrate a logic counter to that of *Anglicanorum Coetibus*. The failure of the Anglican Covenant was largely due to the rejection of ontological conformity in light of the phenomenological differences that characterize the churches of the Anglican Communion. Put simply, *Anglicanorum Coetibus* characteristic of the preference for an ontological cognitive and narrative disposition while the ultimate failure of the Anglican Covenant demonstrates a preference for a phenomenological cognitive and narrative disposition. The following pages contend that it is precisely the tension between the Anglican phenomenological disposition towards difference and the Roman Catholic

ontological disposition towards unity that underlies the tensions between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church. However, this tension need not be the context of division, but, instead can be the fertile ground for ecumenical growth and development.

As Christianity moves into its third millennium, the current state of the ecumenical movement and ecumenical dialogue are undoubtedly at a crossroads. Emilio Castro observed that, “during the last forty or fifty years such tremendous progress has been made in discovering one another, that we are a little impatient today.”¹ The ‘impatience’ to which Castro refers on the one hand fosters disillusionment, frustration, and skepticism for some in regards to the ecumenical movement and its future possibilities. On the other hand, however, the tension that undoubtedly exists within the contemporary ecumenical landscape nurtures the desire to delve more intensely into the possibilities and difficulties of ecumenical dialogue and its reception within separated Christian churches.

The impatience characteristic of the ecumenical movement is better understood as an indication that the ecumenical movement is in the midst of a transition from an initial stage of mutual recognition and discovery governed by a logic characteristic of traditional Western ontology and metaphysics to a new and more challenging stage that is marked by the realization that for all the remarkable achievements of the last fifty years towards Christian unity and communion, there are significant differences that not only remain, but also continue to develop. Hence, the question as to how one makes sense of past ecumenical developments, present happenings, and future prospects requires a new

¹ Emilio Castro, "The Ecumenical Winter," *Mid-Stream* 32, no. 2 (1993): 1.

perspective that accounts for the realities of unity and difference within Christian communion or *koinonia*.

Nowadays, the dialogue partners of the ecumenical movement are not only challenged to make sense of other Christian churches, but also their own Christian identity in relation to their ecumenical encounters with other Christian churches. In other words, ecumenical dialogue is in need of what Paul Ricoeur terms a second *naïveté*, whereby, Christian churches critically make sense of their shared Christian identity symbolically and not simply through a process of correlation. This is particularly true of the ecumenical relationship between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church.

The relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion has a long and complex history. Despite the emergence of many difficulties and differences between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church, there has been remarkable ecumenical progress towards the goal of Christian unity in the last fifty years. However, these ecumenical achievements, which are largely the result of officially recognized dialogue between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church, have been eclipsed recently by what the Roman Catholic Church considers irreconcilable differences vis-à-vis belief, practice, doctrine, and theology. For example, challenges such as the ordination of women as priests and bishops, the ordination of persons living openly in same-sex relationships, and same-sex marriage threaten to stand in the way of realizing what the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) terms “substantial” agreement.² Underlying the ecumenical

² For a definition of “substantial agreement” see Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, “Final Report (1981),” in *Growth in Agreement: Reports and Agreed Statements of*

tension are questions pertaining to the realities of unity and difference and how these realities are interpreted in relationship to one another.

Traditionally, questions regarding unity and difference within ecumenical dialogue are understood and elucidated by means of metaphysical and ontological thinking that are governed by the logic of the one over the many which is typical of a first *naïveté*. Hence, according to Heidegger, Western ontology and metaphysics are more accurately termed *onto-theology*. The *onto-theological* thought of the West establishes unity by subsuming what is different or “other” into its own paradigm. Taking their cue from Heidegger, Western philosophers and theologians raise convincing arguments that challenge the uncritical acceptance of *onto-theological* patterns of thought in the West. A logic governed by the one over the many, which permeates the ecumenical discussions between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church, establishes unity by reconciling what is “other” to itself and making what is dissimilar - similar. In turn, *onto-theological* thinking that is governed by a logic of the one over the many presents significant difficulties when brought to bear upon ecumenical dialogue, which, as the contemporary hermeneutic tradition has shown, entails both unity and difference.

The contemporary Anglican-Roman Catholic (ARC) ecumenical dialogue, its present development, and future success require resources that western ontology cannot provide alone. In order to deepen and further Christian communion between the Anglican Communion and Roman Catholic Church, it is necessary to think beyond the limits imposed by western ontological thought. Put as a question, “Is there a logic that can be employed to facilitate the movement of ecumenical dialogue in general and the

Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level, ed. H. Meyer and L. Vischer (Paulist Press, 1984), 72.

ARC ecumenical dialogue in particular from the ontological presuppositions indicative of a first *naïveté* towards the symbolic rethinking of the second *naïveté*?”

The following pages contend that the ecumenical movement in general and the dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion in particular are in need of a second *naïveté* that is governed by a logic of symbol. Karl Rahner’s theological and philosophical insights regarding symbol and ecumenism provide important resources for the development a logic that accounts for and respects unity and difference as necessary and mutually enriching principles vis-à-vis Christian communion. The retrieval and application of Karl Rahner’s logic of symbol and his theology of ecumenism provide much-needed resources to reach beyond the limits imposed upon the ARC ecumenical dialogue by a logic of ontology.

The following accomplishes the task of establishing a second *naïveté* that is governed by a logic of symbol for the dialogue between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church in two basic steps. Firstly, the following develops a theology of ecumenism that is supported by Paul Ricoeur’s hermeneutical philosophy and built upon with Karl Rahner’s theology of symbol. This work maintains that ecumenical relationships necessitate an attentiveness to hermeneutical activity. The hermeneutic philosophy of Paul Ricoeur and his attentiveness to the interpretative moments of understanding, explanation, and appropriation provide a general methodological structure. Secondly, the following applies the ecumenical theology developed to the contemporary Anglican-Roman Catholic ecumenical dialogue.

Chapter one develops a critique of the onto-theological presuppositions that accompany Western thought in general and Roman Catholic thought in particular. The

presuppositions of the *onto-theological* characterize an initial stage of understanding and interpretation that Paul Ricoeur terms the first *naïveté*. Chapter one elucidates the uncritical acceptance of beliefs regarding reality and meaning that accompany the first *naïveté* and suggests that postmodernity and the inescapable confrontation with plurality and difference that characterizes a globalized world provide an impetus for questioning traditional *onto-theological* presuppositions of western thought that is centered on *Being*. This prompts the appearance of critical postures, or what Paul Ricoeur calls a hermeneutic of suspicion, towards presuppositions that were once uncritically held. Such a critical posture is a productive moment in the movement towards a second *naïveté* where understanding moves from an ontological vehemence to a symbolic interpretation and understanding.³

After developing the characteristics and the need for a second *naïveté* that understands and interprets the world symbolically, Chapter two develops the principles of Karl Rahner's theology and philosophy of symbol. The symbol, as Rahner understands it, is a differentiated unity or a unity-in-difference. Rahner contends "all beings are by their nature symbolic, because they necessarily 'express' themselves in order to attain their own nature."⁴ As such, reality has a symbolic structure in which *being* expresses itself in its own other. The symbol and the symbolized, or the expression and what is being expressed, stand in opposition to one another within an original unity. Accordingly, *being* realizes itself or 'becomes' through a process of emanation into its

³ Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor the Creation of Meaning in Language* (London: Routledge, 2003), 291-302.

⁴ Karl Rahner, "The Theology of Symbol," in *More Recent Writings*, Theological Investigations (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1966), 224.

own other (expression) and return to itself. *Being*, at least for human persons and communities, is always in the process of becoming what it already is.

Chapter three applies the characteristics and principles developed in chapter one and chapter two to the ecumenical movement and the activity of dialogue. Firstly, the possibility and necessity of ecumenism is rooted in the fundamental conviction that all Christians are united as brothers and sisters in and through Jesus Christ. Despite this fundamental recognition of one another as Christian, there are significant differences as to how Christian churches interpret and understand what is necessary to fully realize and express Christian *koinonia*. Chapter three examines the contemporary situation of ecumenical dialogue and the roles of unity and difference. Secondly, chapter three examines Karl Rahner's understanding of symbol developed in chapter two in relationship to his theology of ecumenism and dialogue. Rethinking Christian *koinonia* in light of Rahner's understanding of symbol provides a framework for interpreting ecumenical dialogue with a second *naïveté*.

The one Church of Christ, animated by the Holy Spirit, is brought to expression within the historical, social, and cultural diversity of the world. Hence, if the Church of Christ is truly universal, it must be understood as such within the context of the diversity of the world. Christian churches mediate the Church of Christ in their particular social, historical, and cultural context. From this perspective, it is realistic to expect a diversity of expression. Contemporary experiences of division within Christianity are largely the result of confusing or correlating expressions of the Church with the actual Church of Christ. While all Christian churches must maintain the conviction that their community is an authentic and even the fullest or most meaningful expression of the Church of Christ

within their context, from a symbolic understanding, they cannot hold an exclusive identification between their community and the Church of Christ. Chapter three argues that a symbolic interpretation and understanding calls for greater depth than simply the recognition of the uniqueness and fullness of one's own community. It also recognizes that the relationship between the expression and what is being expressed is in the process of constantly "becoming" what it already is. The purpose of ecumenical dialogue, from a symbolic perspective, is not simply the reconciling of differences or establishing unity by determining the least common denominator of Christian identity on the one hand or proselytizing and converting others to one's own understanding of Christian identity on the other hand. A symbolic approach to ecumenical dialogue, instead, begins with the recognition that the Church of Christ comes to expression, however imperfectly, wherever belief in Jesus Christ is proclaimed as God and savior. Hence, the purpose of ecumenical dialogue when it is governed by a logic of symbol focuses on the cooperative effort of separated and imperfect Christian churches to "become" what they are already are; the visible expression of the Church of Christ. This does not imply that all symbolic expressions are equal. Instead, difference and diversity are the fertile soil that compels Christians to delve more deeply into the one Church of Christ and how one's own community brings it to expression in the world. Ecumenical dialogue in light of a symbolic understanding and interpretation calls Christian churches to challenge one another both internally (one's own symbolic expression) and externally (the symbolic expression of other Christian churches).

The fourth chapter develops a brief sketch of the pertinent social, historical, cultural, and theological features of the ecumenical relationship between the Anglican

Communion and the Roman Catholic Church. This chapter analyzes the constitutional break that occurred between the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England during the reign of Henry VIII, the development of the *Via Media* as an identity of the Anglican Church, Leo XIII's papal bull, *Apostolicae Curae*, the noticeable change that occurs in the relationship between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church at the Second Vatican Council, and the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) dialogues. Finally, chapter four examines Benedict XVI's apostolic letter *Anglicanorum Coetibus* and the proposed Anglican Covenant. The complexity of both documents elucidates the ecumenical tensions indicative of the present-day relationship between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church.

The final chapter undertakes the task of re-thinking the contemporary ecumenical relationship and dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion in light of the symbolic process detailed in earlier chapters. Chapter five argues that mutual recognition requires that both the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church recognize one another as real-symbolic expressions of the Church of Christ. As such, mutual recognition elicits a shift from recognizing one's-self as *the* particular expression of Christ's church to the mutual recognition of one another as particular expressions in relationship to the Church of Christ. Such an approach need not necessitate 'substantial' agreement. Hence, a real-symbolic approach opens avenues for discussion and dialogue that are closed off to the present-day dialogue, which is governed almost exclusively by western ontology and a logic of the one over the many. This shift is indicative of a second *naïveté* whereby the Anglican Communion and Roman Catholic

Church must accept that *koinonia* thought exclusively through ontology or phenomenology is simply not adequate.

Chapter five argues that the fullest expression of Christian identity is intimately bound to ecclesial identity. As such, a proper interpretation of orthodoxy and orthopraxis and their relationship to one another are central concerns for ecumenical discussion and ecumenical activity. Chapter five examines how the Anglican Communion and Roman Catholic Church can move towards a fuller real-symbolic recognition of Christian *koinonia* in and through the marks of Christian identity (i.e. one, holy, catholic, and apostolic) and the activities of Christian life (i.e. *leitourgia*, *martyria*, and *diakonia*). A symbolic re-interpretation and re-appropriation of the marks of Christian identity and the activities of Christian life shed new light on present-day ecumenical controversies and tensions surrounding issues such as orders, Eucharist, and shared worship. A symbolic approach extends beyond the categorical concerns of ontology, takes seriously various expressions of the priesthood of Christ, and opens up a space for further dialogue and growth towards mutual recognition, however imperfect, of orders and by extension Eucharist and worship. Symbol also broadens the possibilities of shared *martyria*. In particular doctrinal agreement is not an agreement of conformity. Finally, a symbolic approach to ecumenical dialogue between the Anglican Communion and Roman Catholic Church creates promising prospects for *diakonia*. A symbolic approach understands shared *diakonia* as a way in which both Churches express the Church of Christ through “love of neighbor”. This approach to *diakonia* does not envision service as a cooperative effort in lieu of doctrinal agreement; it envisions shared service to one another and the world as a real indication and manifestation of the Church of Christ that also brings about

and confirms both Churches as real expressions (or symbols) of the Church of Christ. Thus shared *diakonia* both elicits and furthers unity in a real-symbolic way.

While the following pages engage the ecumenical process with respect to the realities of pluralism and globalization, the scope of the project is intentionally confined to Western ecumenical sensibilities. At first glance, this may appear to be problematic given the growth of both the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church in areas outside of the West. However, the dialogues between both communions and the authoritative structures of both communions remain predominantly Western in terms of their cognitive and narrative sensibilities. Hence, the cognitive and narrative conversion for which the following argues must take seriously the deep seated influence of Western thought in both communions.

The overarching conviction of the following pages is that the success of the ecumenical movement is not a function of its ability to resolve disagreements, controversies, or arguments between churches. The goal of the ecumenical movement and its success, instead are functions of recognition and unity. Tension has always and will always exist within the church. The real challenge of the ecumenical is not in the development of theologies of resolution; the real challenge of the ecumenical movement is the development of theologies of recognition that can cope with the tensions that will continue to arise within Christ's Church. In what follows, the case is made that a theology of symbol provides many of the resources to further a theology of recognition.

CHAPTER ONE

POSTCRITICAL THOUGHT AND THE NEED FOR SYMBOL IN THE WEST

1. Introduction

Largely indebted to the philosophical constructs available during a particular period in history, theological reflection is intimately connected to the broader sociocultural and intellectual interpretive paradigm of a particular time and place. It is essential, if an apt and sincere interpretation of the current ecumenical landscape is to be undertaken, that one first recognizes how Western theology profits from the larger sociocultural and intellectual milieu.

The history of Western Christianity is indicative of three essential basic situations. These situations include the brief period of Jewish Christianity, the lengthy period of an almost exclusive association of Christianity with Hellenistic and European culture and civilization, and finally the recent realization during the twentieth century that the “Church’s living space is from the very outset the whole world.”⁵

A central concern in each of the basic essential situations of Christianity is the *koinonia* of the Church. Maintaining and visibly expressing the relationship between the many and one is of fundamental importance for interpreting the bonds of communion of the Church in any situation. This inevitably requires an interpretation of unity and diversity that considers the intrinsic relationship between the two. John Zizioulas writes:

The most important condition attached to diversity is that it should not destroy unity. The local Church must be structured in such a way that unity does not destroy diversity and diversity does not destroy unity. This appears at first sight to be a totally unrealistic principle. And yet, the careful balance between the “one”

⁵ Karl Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council," in *Concern for the Church*, Theological Investigations (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 82-84.

and the “many” in the structure of the community is to be discovered behind all canonical provisions in the early Church.⁶

The focus of this chapter is the development of the “careful balance” required to interpret the roles of unity and difference within the changing essential basic situation of contemporary Western Christianity that is increasingly characterized by the realities of pluralism and globalization. The contemporary sociocultural and intellectual climate indicative of a pluralistic and globalized context implicates theological reflection and interpretation in a variety of significant ways, not least of which are contemporary concerns of ecumenical theologians regarding proper unity and acceptable difference.

The intention of this chapter is to address questions regarding unity and difference in a pluralistic and globalized context by developing a constructive postcritical logic that is governed by symbol. This chapter accomplishes this task by utilizing various insights regarding the concept of mystery and its interpretation in order to establish the necessity of a postcritical approach to unity and difference that avoids abandoning, discarding, or reducing difference to sameness, and recognizes the symbiotic significance of unity and difference. Put simply, unity does not mean uniformity.

2. Unity and Difference in Western Theology

Western thinkers have elucidated the nature and purpose of unity and difference in a variety of ways throughout history. In order to avoid falling into an overly simplistic portrait of the complex historical landscape of Western thought, while also remaining within the scope and confines of the task at hand, this section employs Avery Dulles’ methodology for interpreting various periods of Western thought and Christian theology

⁶ John Zizioulas, *The One and the Many : Studies on God, Man, the Church and the World Today*, 1st ed., Contemporary Christian Thought Series (Alhambra, CA: Sebastian Press, 2010). Kindle location 1457-1460.

via a description of three successive attitudes towards criticism.⁷ Dulles provides a framework for a concise narrative that develops the chief contours and interconnectedness of the diverse epochs of Western thought and Christianity. The three successive attitudes include: the precritical period, the critical period, and the postcritical period. Drawing on Dulles' methodological insights, this section expounds how unity and difference are interpreted in precritical, critical, and postcritical Western thought and Christianity.

2.1 Precritical Western Thought and Theology

The Hellenistic/European paradigm dominates most of the history of Western Christian thought and is indicative of period marked by precritical thinking. For Roman Catholicism, the precritical stage, which accords preference to unity over difference via thought that weds theological belief and ontology, practically speaking, lasts until the Second Vatican Council.⁸

⁷ Avery Dulles, *The Craft of Theology : From Symbol to System* (New York: Crossroad, 1995), 3-5.

⁸ Karl Rahner observes that "...the Second Vatican Council is the beginning of a tentative approach by the Church to the discovery and official realization of itself as *world-Church*... the Church was always *in potentia* world-Church and because the actualizing of this potentiality itself involved a long historical process of coming-to-be, the origins of which coincide with the beginning of European colonialism and of the modern world-mission of the Church from the sixteenth century, an actualizing which is not completely finished even today. But if we look at the macroscopic and official action of the Church and at the same time become more clearly aware that the concrete, real activity of the Church... was what we might venture to describe as that of an export firm, exporting to the whole world a European religion along with other elements of this supposedly superior culture and civilization, and not really attempting to change the commodity, then it seems appropriate and justified to regard Vatican II as the first great official event in which the Church came to be realized as *world-Church*. Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council," 78. This historical description admittedly wants in relation to the diversity of Eastern Orthodoxy and Protestant Christianity that develops in the West from the Sixteenth century onward. In other words, while Roman Catholicism inhabits a precritical space until the Second Vatican Council, this cannot be said of Christianity as a whole. For instance, the recognition of legitimate diversity and its theological articulation receives recognition and develops in Protestant and Orthodox Christianity well before Roman Catholicism. This is evidenced by the refusal of the Roman Catholic Church to officially

The precritical is not to be mistaken as characteristic of the absence of critical thought or argument; instead, it is more appropriately conceived of as what Paul Ricoeur terms a first naïveté. In this initial naïveté, doubt and criticism are not leveled against authoritative sources, i.e. sacred texts, hierarchical authority, and deeply rooted sociocultural beliefs and ideas. Authoritative texts and beliefs are used as interpretative keys for making sense of reality and experience, but they are thought and uncritically assumed to be exempt from critical interpretation and doubt. As such, these authoritative sources are naively taken at face value and their meaning is assumed to be literal and immediate. Sources such as these provide canonical norms in so far as they establish a common standard and universal reference for explaining, appropriating, and understanding reality and existence. In the precritical context, making sense of one's experience of reality and existence occurs via an unquestioned reliance on sources of authority. Precritical unity is thus achieved and maintained through the common adherence to these canonical sources of authority.

Western theology during the precritical period enshrines three interrelated sources of authority: Scripture, Tradition, and Hellenistic ideas about the nature of existence.⁹ These sources establish an interpretative triad whereby each of the sources enlightens the

participate in meaningful ecumenical dialogue until the latter half of the Twentieth century while Protestants and Orthodox had already established meaningful structures for ecumenical dialogue by the beginning of the twentieth century that ultimately led to the establishment of the World Council of Churches (WCC). For a brief history of the development of the ecumenical movement in relation to the formation of the WCC see: World Council of Churches, "History" <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/about-us/wcc-history> (accessed June 22, 2014).

⁹ It is difficult to demarcate and distinguish Christian thought and theology from the larger sociocultural and intellectual context of the precritical West. In general, the two develop side by side and in relationship to one another in such a way that they cannot be separated. This is evidenced by the fact that most philosophers of the precritical West from Augustine onwards were also Christian theologians. See: Bertrand Russell, *The History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1945), 301-490.

others. During this period Western Christianity adopts the Hellenistic logic that gives priority to unity over difference and the articulation of this logic via ontology and metaphysics.¹⁰

Aristotle initiates an approach to interpreting reality and existence that implicitly shapes precritical Western thought and theology. As Aristotle envisages it, metaphysics or first philosophy is the “science of causes and principles of what is most knowable.”¹¹ In so doing, Aristotle introduces a basic tension within traditional metaphysical thought; namely, metaphysics is conceived of as both a general and a special science. As a general science metaphysics is ontology, but as a special science it is theology.¹² As a general science, ontological inquiry inevitably leads to the special science of theology and vice versa. Hence, Aristotle’s metaphysical thought envisions a basic and

¹⁰ Both metaphysics and ontology include a wide range of ideas, beliefs, and conceptions about the nature and structure of reality and existence. Without undermining the significance of these distinctions, this study maintains a broad and general understanding of metaphysics and ontology. Ontology is the “doctrine about that which is.” *Sacramentum Mundi* (London,: Burns & Oates, 1968), s.v. "Ontology." Ontology is the study of ‘being’, but more exactly, attempts to answer the question, “why is there something rather than nothing?” Louis K. Dupré, *Metaphysics and Culture*, The Aquinas Lecture (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1994), 1. Metaphysics, on the other hand, “rests on the assumption that the mere appearance of things does not include their justification, that it requires a foundation.”

¹¹ Robert Audi, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 48.

¹² Describing metaphysics as a special science, Aristotle writes, “But there is also a science of that which has being qua possessed of being and separable. So we must decide whether this science is to be considered the same as the science of nature or rather different. Well, the science of nature has to do with those things that have a principle of process within them, whereas mathematics is a theoretical science and is indeed a science of permanent things, but not of separable things. So there is some science, different from either of these, which is about what has separable being free from process, if indeed there be any such substance, a substance, that is, which is separable and unprocessed.... This would be the primary and fundamental principle. And this shows that there are three kinds of theoretical science, physics, mathematics and theology. And the highest kind of science is the theoretical kind, and of theoretical sciences the highest is the last in our list. It has to do with the most valuable of the things that are, and it is the proper object of a science that determines its relative excellence.” Aristotle, *Metaphysics* (London: Penguin Books, 1998), 335.; *ibid.*, 324.

fundamental relationship between ontology and theology that is founded on the logic of the one over the many. Alois Holder writes:

[T]he “first philosophy” is the knowledge, supremely meaningful for its own sake, of permanent “first causes and principles” of all that is... The inquiry into beings as such leads to a superexcellent being, and the search for the many “first” principles to an ultimate ground: the divine, which is thought thinking of itself in pure contemplation. Thus in this science of Aristotle which is entitled metaphysics, theology and ontology are linked in primordial unity...¹³

Precritical Western theology adopts the Hellenistic logic of the one over many expressed in metaphysical/ontological ideas and concepts as an interpretative resource for understanding and explaining Scripture and Tradition. Recognizing Western theology’s indebtedness to Hellenistic categories of thought, Louis Dupré writes:

...Plato and Aristotle had reformulated Parmenides’ distinction between being and non-being as the relation between the *reality* of appearances and the *reality* of the ground. Plato had done so in terms of participation, Aristotle of causality. Christians adopted their theories, alternating between one and the other... when he [Aquinas] conceived the dependence in causal terms, the cause remained immanent in the effect and was also functioning as ground.¹⁴

This precritical synthesis in Western theology undergoes significant development in the Patristic and Scholastic periods; Augustine of Hippo (354 CE – 430 CE) exemplifies the former and Thomas Aquinas (1225 CE – 1274 CE) the latter.¹⁵

The theology of Augustine synthesizes Scripture and Tradition with Platonic thought as it is mediated through Neo-Platonism.¹⁶ Augustine adopts Plato’s doctrine of

¹³ *Sacramentum Mundi* (London,: Burns & Oates, 1968), s.v. "Metaphysics."

¹⁴ Dupré, *Metaphysics and Culture*, 2.

¹⁵ This is not a claim that all Christian theology is either Augustinian or Thomistic, but rather that these two figures represent the general contours of the articulation of unity and difference in precritical Western theology and are illustrative of the synthesis between Hellenistic/European thought and Christian belief.

¹⁶ The relationship between the Hellenistic conception of metaphysics and Augustine’s theological thought is evident throughout Augustine’s writings. It is apparent that Augustine perceives an affinity between the Christian belief articulated in Scripture and Tradition and

matter and form that holds material substances are subject to corruption and change while immaterial substances of form are eternal and incorruptible. The material world, however, is good in so far as it *participates* in the form of the Sacred.¹⁷ Augustine's use of the Platonic logic of participation yields several attributes of the divine nature and according to Augustine, God's true nature is 'Being'. All things that exist really do have existence but in a manner that is contingent and dependent on God; in relation to God "other existing things have being in a way... but in a way lack being."¹⁸

Augustine construes difference in terms of the degree and the manner of participation in God who is Creator. According to Augustine's logic of participation, difference is legitimated only if it can be subsumed under and shown to participate in the principle common to all beings; the Christian God. If difference is not subsumable under the net cast by the unfolding levels of participation, then according to Augustine's

Platonic thought. For example, Augustine writes, "By having thus read the books of the Platonists, and having been taught by them to search for the incorporeal truth, I saw how your invisible things are understood through the things that are made. And, even when I was thrown back, I still sentenced what it was that the dullness of my soul would not allow me to contemplate. I was assured that you were, and that you were infinite, though not diffused in finite space or infinity; that you truly are, who are ever the same, varying neither impart motion; and that all things are from you, and is proved by this sure cause alone: that they exist." Augustine, *Confessions* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2007), 106.

¹⁷ Augustine develops the concept of participation in relation to his hierarchy of natures. Augustine writes, "Then, when they go on to look into the nature of the life itself if they find it mere nutritive life, without sensibility, such as that of plants, they consider it inferior to sentient life, such as that of cattle; and above this, again, they place intelligent life, such as that of men. And, perceiving that even this is subject to change, they are compelled to place above it, again, that unchangeable life, which is not at one time foolish, at another time wise, but on the contrary is wisdom itself. For a wise intelligence, that is, one that has attained to wisdom, was, previous to its attaining wisdom, unwise. But wisdom itself never was unwise, and never can become so. And if men never caught sight of this wisdom, they could never with entire confidence prefer a life which is unchangeably wise to one that is subject to change. This will be evident, if we consider that the very rule of truth by which they affirm the unchangeable life to be the more excellent, is itself unchangeable: and they cannot find such a rule, except by going beyond their own nature; for they find nothing in themselves that is not subject to change." Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, trans., J.F. Shaw (New York: Courier Corporation, 2009), 7.

¹⁸ Eleonore Kretzmann and Norman Stump, *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 83.

understanding of participation, it is other than God and thus is either an unreal illusion or will ultimately perish and be abolished. Hence, the many obtains its meaning and significance only in relation to and from the One. This logic permeates Augustine's teachings and Western theology after him.¹⁹

Augustine's influence on the whole of Western thought is undeniable, and Western theology tends to recapitulate Augustine's metaphysical dualism and the logic of one over many.²⁰ Augustine's theological synthesis is a point of departure for Western theology and marks the beginning of the preoccupation with the theological articulation of Christian experience, existence, and reality via Greek metaphysics and ontology.²¹

Thomas Aquinas develops a remarkable synthesis between Christianity and Greek thought. Like Aristotle, Aquinas sees an intimate connection between theology and ontology. Unlike Aristotle, Aquinas interprets reality, existence, and experience through the Christian sources of authority of which Augustine's teaching holds a central place.

¹⁹ For instance, the metaphysical dualism indicative of the human person as body and soul in which the soul is "a certain substance, sharing in reason and suited for the task of ruling the body" is corrected by envisioning the soul as the unifying and animating principle of the body within the hierarchical structure of the human being. Joseph M. Colleran, *Saint Augustine: The Greatness of the Soul, The Teacher* (New York: Newman Press, 1978), 13:22. The sacraments as visible signs of God's invisible grace; the city of God and the earthly city; the inner-self and outer-self; even difference within the Trinity cannot escape the hierarchical principle of the one over the many. Augustine holds that the three divine persons of the Trinity share the same divine nature in such a way that any person of the Trinity could have theoretically become incarnate. Augustine unfolds his theology of the Trinity beginning with a common divine essence. Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel (New York: Crossroad Pub., 1997), 17-19.

²⁰ Augustine's understanding of sign is particularly important in this regard. Augustine develops his theory of signs within his theory of language. The concept consists of a signified and signifier that when properly established conveys meaning. Communication for Augustine is possible when meaning is attached, either naturally or intentionally, to a sign. The sign is a central concept for the possibility of divine communication. Hence, Augustine's theology of the sacrament is understood as an instance of divine communication via some earthly sign.

²¹ While Christianity, even before Augustine, adopts Greek philosophical terminology to explicate various Christian beliefs i.e. *homoousios*, *hypostases*, Augustine initiates a theological and systematic turn for theological discourse whereby Western Theology becomes dependent on Greek philosophy.

According to Thomas, there is a distinction between metaphysics as the indirect philosophical examination of God as the First Cause that is discovered and brought to expression through the human intellect – both as a special science (theology) and general science (ontology) – and theology that begins its examination with the revelation of God through Scripture and tradition. Commenting on the Thomistic relationship between faith and reason John Wippel writes:

Aquinas is convinced that there can be no real conflict between faith and reason or between faith and philosophy because, in his view, both derive from one and the same ultimate source: on the one hand, God viewed as the author of revelation; on the other hand, God viewed as the creative source of the human intellect and the created universe, which it studies and from which it draws principles. To admit that faith and reason could really be in contradiction with one another would be the acknowledgement that in such a case one or the other was false. For Aquinas this would ultimately make God himself the author of falsity, which he rejects as impossible.²²

Understanding and explaining the relationship between the one and the many is of particular importance for Aquinas. Aquinas understands this relationship in terms of participation; however, the explanation of the concept of participation undergoes a significant revision in light of Aristotelian metaphysics. Aquinas describes three ways of participation: 1) logical, 2) ontological, and 3) causal.²³ Logical participation is illustrative of how a particular species participates in a genre. There is logical way in which entities that are complex and diverse participate in the less complex and simple.²⁴ Ontological participation is indicative of the way difference is united in a single entity. For instance, the human being, according to Thomas, is a composition of body and soul.

²² John F. Wippel, "Metaphysics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, ed. Norman Stump Eleonore Kretzmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 73-74.

²³ *Ibid.*, 81.

²⁴ Joseph Koterski, "The Doctrine of Participation in Thomistic Metaphysics," in *The Future of Thomism*, ed. Deal W. Hudson and Dennis W. Moran (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 189-190.

There is a hylomorphic-like structure of participation whereby under a single subject there is a complex of relationships involved.²⁵ Lastly, Aquinas envisions causality as a way of participation. Borrowing from Aristotle, Aquinas describes four types of causes: material, formal, efficient, and final. According to Thomas, all effects participate in a cause.

Aquinas espouses that all created things find their cause for existing in something else. Because the effect participates in the cause, there is always a trace or resemblance of the cause in its effect. God, however, is the cause that causes but has no cause. As first cause, everything that issues from God resembles God while God does not resemble anything, but is the source of all resemblance. Hence, for Aquinas, God is wholly other and can be known only through analogy.²⁶ According to the logic of causality, unity is established in the diversity of existence through one common cause. The farther an effect is removed from its ultimate origin the greater its difference and complexity. Difference is thus a negative attribute of the creature. Difference is not an illusion; it is real, but ultimately it is problematic. Interpreting the Christian God of Revelation as the *causa sui* means that the further the creature is causally removed from its creator, the less like the creator it is. Hence, the many effects observed by the intellect find their ultimate origin in the one true first cause, namely the Trinity revealed in Christian Scripture and Tradition.

The precritical period of Western thought and theology develops several significant contours for thinking unity and difference. Firstly, the unity of existence is discovered via conceptual interpretation. Precritical Western thought and theology

²⁵ Wippel, 94.

²⁶ Koterski, 190-194.

adhere to the principle of one over many and the interpretation of this principle via participation. Secondly, there is a presumption that the “one” of the one over the many in Hellenistic thought and philosophy and the Christian God of revelation are synonymous or at least compatible with one another. Thirdly, the Hellenistic belief of the one over many is mediated to Christian theology via sources that utilize the ontological and metaphysical philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. This is evidenced, for example, in the vocabulary of Western theology that adopts Hellenistic philosophical terms such as being, causality, nature, accidents, substance, etc. to articulate Christian belief and doctrine. Lastly, the precritical synthesis of Hellenistic ideas with the Christian sources of authority, especially the synthesis that occurs in the thought of Augustine and Aquinas, provide important foundations for later interpretative logics that develop within Western thought and Christianity. Despite the limits of the precritical, one would be mistaken to disregard its significance too quickly. The modern understanding of unity and difference is deeply attached to its precritical roots. The precritical attitude also holds community in high esteem insofar as the sources of authority are shared and belong to everyone. Hence, there is strong connection between morality and the shared sources of authority.

2.2 - Critical Western Thought and Theology

The second successive stage takes a critical posture towards the beliefs and assumptions of the precritical stage. The critical stage is indicative of two “subattitudes” that, while remarkably different with respect to how criticism is directed, nevertheless share a common affinity for criticism. These “subattitudes” are commonly designated by the terms modernity and postmodernity.

2.2.1 - Modernity

The modern critical attitude takes umbrage with precritical sources of authority and the precritical assumption that such sources are immune from criticism and doubt. Associated with demythologization, the modern critical stage begins with universal methodic doubt and culminates with presumably self-evident facts and principles arrived at through rational testing and observation.²⁷ Truth and fact are interchangeable terms that are envisioned as universally valid realities and can be arrived at through universally valid processes that abstract truth and fact from what is otherwise untrue and false. Reality is distinguished from illusion and truth from falsehood on the basis of critical verification obtained through empirical observation that is beyond any reasonable doubt.

The shift in Western consciousness from a precritical attitude to modern criticism represents a significant movement in sociocultural and intellectual attitudes in the West.

Jürgen Habermas recognizes that:

Only up to the threshold of modernity are a culture's accomplishments of reaching self-understanding joined together in interpretive systems that preserve a structure homologous to the lifeworld's entire structure of horizons. Until that point, the unity, unavoidably supposed, of a lifeworld constructed concentrically around "me" and "us", here and now, had been reflected in the totalizing unity of mythological narratives, religious doctrines, and metaphysical explanations. With modernity, however, a devaluing shift befell those forms of explanation that had allowed these very theories to retain a remnant of the unifying possessed by myths of origin.²⁸

The modern critical attitude believes that the nature of reality is discerned epistemologically and seeks to uncover the epistemic ground and foundations of reality. Comparing the modern critical attitude with the precritical attitude Jean-Luc Marion writes, "For ontic excellence gives way to noetic excellence in the hierarchization of first

²⁷ Dulles, *The Craft of Theology*, 4.

²⁸ Jürgen Habermas and William Mark Hohengarten, *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992), 17.

terms, which only become first in being known, never again in so far as they are beings.”²⁹ Thus, Aristotle’s metaphysical/ontological ground gives way to Descartes’ epistemological first known. This transition significantly alters the metaphysical relationship between being and knowledge. Dupré writes:

For most modern philosophers cause belonged to the ontological order and ground to the epistemic... As cause became separated from ground, the effect was increasingly conceived as extrinsic to the cause. The metaphysical search for the ultimate ground became transformed into the quest for epistemic foundations. The mechanistic causality of the seventeenth century annulled the traditional metaphysical question as meaningless: being meant no more than the sum of all beings. Instead, it posited a series of independent substances extrinsically related to one another, one of which was the First Cause.³⁰

The modern critical attitude accords a special status to the rational subject as the central arbiter of reality. It is subjects who discover and determine objects.³¹ There is, however, an important affinity between modern criticism and the precritical attitude; both share a general preference for theory over practice whereby reality is governed by “general

²⁹ Jean-Luc Marion, *In Excess : Studies of Saturated Phenomena*, trans. Robyn Horner and Vincent Berraud, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 9.

³⁰ Dupré, *Metaphysics and Culture*, 3-4.

³¹ There are two reactions towards criticism within Western Christian theology: the “paracritical” and the “countercritical” movements. The Kantian distinction between faith and reason is illustrative of the paracritical reaction to criticism. The paracritical distinguishes between the realm of science and empirical proof and the realm of religious belief. The former is governed by the critical method and is animated by doubt while the latter is governed by sentiment and volition. This attempt to reconcile precritical belief with modern criticism ultimately establishes two compartmentalized domains that have little, if anything, to offer one another. The countercritical movement, which is exemplified in neo-scholastic or manual theology, relies heavily upon its sources of authority to develop a type of criticism that utilizes syllogistic logic and is directed towards the modern world. The countercritical movement, especially within Roman Catholicism, developed a rigid logic of unity based upon truths gleaned from Scripture and Tradition and Scholastic Theology, of which Thomistic theology and metaphysics held pride of place. Dulles, *The Craft of Theology*, 4-6. This type of rigid countercritical logic culminated in Pius X’s “Oath Against Modernism” that was required to be sworn by anyone undertaking ecclesiastical authority and responsibility from 1910 until 1967. See Jodock, Darrell Jodock, Ed. *Catholicism Contending with Modernity: Roman Catholic Modernism and Anti-Modernism in Historical Context*. NY: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 1-19.

theories either of mind or matter” in varying degrees.³² The preference for theory over practice in modern and precritical thought has implications for thinking the relationship between the one and the many. Habermas writes:

The one and the many, abstractly conceived as the relationship of identity and difference, is the fundamental relation that metaphysical thinking comprehends both as logical and ontological: the one is both axiom and essential ground, principle and origin. From it the many is derived – in the sense both of grounding and of originating. And, thanks to this origin, the many is reproduced in an ordered multiplicity.³³

The affinity for theory over practice and the methodological dissolution of difference is a central concern and target of criticism for the postmodern mindset.

2.2.2 – *Postmodernity*

Modern criticism and precritical thought share a common conviction that existence and reality are accessible through rational thought. Even the reality and experience of God is subject to the concepts of rational thought.³⁴ Postmodernity, however, deals in expressing what modernity is not capable of thinking, i.e. allowing the otherwise absent ‘other’ to manifest itself; presencing the absent.

The term postmodern is generally associated with the critique and destabilization of the beliefs and assumptions of modernity. The postmodern critique disrupts modern assumptions and beliefs by challenging its foundational structures and systems.³⁵ Seeking to “demythologize” the beliefs of modernity, the central task of the postmodern agenda is to disrupt, leave behind, overcome, and deconstruct modern beliefs and

³² Habermas and Hohengarten, *Postmetaphysical Thinking*, 18.

³³ *Ibid.*, 32.

³⁴ Anselm’s famous definition of God as “that which no greater can be conceived” is one indication of the significance Western thought and theology give to rationality. M.J. Charlesworth, *St. Anselm’s Proslogion: With a Reply on Behalf of the Fool by Gaunilo and the Author’s Reply to Gaunilo*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965, 60-62.

³⁵ Robyn Horner, *Jean-Luc Marion : A Theo-Logical Introduction* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub. Co., 2005), 16.

assumptions.³⁶ Animated by suspicion and doubt, postmodernity manifests a logic governed by critical deconstruction that is directed at attempts, which claim to establish or arrive at the definitive 'one'. In so doing, postmodern thought accords primacy to universal diversity over bringing diversity together under a common universal principle.

Criticism, however, is the common tool that animates both the postmodern project and the modern project. Both share a common critical attitude and distrust towards the assumptions and systems of beliefs inherited from preceding eras. In a sense, especially in view of criticism, postmodernity is modernity's logical conclusion; it is modern criticism turned in on itself.³⁷

Criticism, whether modern or postmodern, promises possibilities but at the expense of closing off and bracketing other possible experiences of existence and reality for which it rejects or cannot provide an account. This, however, need not mean that a critical attitude that is animated by doubt or suspicion ought to be perceived as superfluous and unnecessary. Criticism, instead, is more properly envisaged as an

³⁶ Broadly understood, the term postmodern is "a complex cluster concept that includes the following elements: an anti- (or post-) epistemological standpoint; anti-essentialism; anti-realism; anti-foundationalism; opposition to transcendental arguments and transcendental standpoints; rejection of the picture of knowledge as accurate representation; rejection of truth as correspondence to reality; rejection of the very idea of canonical descriptions; rejection of final vocabularies, i.e., rejection of principles, distinctions, and descriptions that are thought to be unconditionally binding for all times, persons, and places; and a suspicion of grand narratives, metanarratives of the sort perhaps best illustrated by dialectical materialism." Audi, *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 725.

³⁷ It should be noted that the postmodern context arises out of and addresses the concerns that surface as result of the crisis of modernity, especially in light of experiences such as World War II, the Holocaust, and use of atomic weapons. See: Thomas G. Guarino, "Postmodernity and Five Fundamental Theological Issues," *Theological Studies* 57, no. 4 (1996).; Lieven Boeve, "Method in Postmodern Theology a Case Study," in *The Presence of Transcendence : Thinking 'Sacrament' in a Postmodern Age*, ed. L. Boeve and John Ries (Leuven: Peeters, 2001).; Paul Sheehan, "Postmodernism and Philosophy," in *The Cambridge companion to postmodern theology*, ed. Kevin J Vanhoozer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).; Merold Westphal, *Overcoming onto-Theology toward a Postmodern Christian Faith* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001).

integral moment in the larger process of interpretation. In other words, criticism challenges the immediacy of belief, but it need not destroy such belief. Instead, criticism provides the possibility for belief that is mediated and informed.

2.3 Postcritical Western Thought and Theology

As Western thought and theology begins to recognize the limitations of the critical attitude embodied in both modernity and postmodernity, the process of interpretation must begin anew. Paul Ricoeur writes, "... if we can no longer live the great symbolisms of the sacred in accordance with the original belief in them, we can, we modern men, aim at a second naïveté in and through criticism. In short, it is by interpreting that we can hear again."³⁸

The naively held immediacy of belief that undergoes criticism need not mean that its validity is vanquished. Criticism instead provides for the possibility of an "informed" belief and affords the prospect of a belief that is understood, appropriated, and explained differently—a belief that is mediated and expressed by the contemporary sociocultural and intellectual paradigm. The postcritical attitude is not interested in overcoming criticism; but instead, it is animated by a hermeneutic of trust that is fundamentally constructive in so far as it seeks to discover meaning after and in relation to criticism. The postcritical is characterized by a second naïveté. Describing the second naïveté and its relationship to criticism, Paul Ricoeur writes:

In its return to the spoken word, reflection continues to be reflection, that is, the understanding of meaning; reflection becomes hermeneutic; this the only way in which it can become concrete and still remain reflection. The second naïveté is not the first; it is postcritical and not precritical; it is an informed naïveté.³⁹

³⁸ Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 351.

³⁹ Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy : An Essay on Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 496.

A postcritical attitude seeks to establish a second naïveté within the contemporary context of globalization and pluralism and understands these realities as instructive resources. Most importantly, the postcritical attitude facilitates a movement beyond criticism by providing the resources for an interpretation of unity and difference that does not naively assume a metaphysical or ontological preference for unity over diversity, that does not hold critical abstraction as the universal principle for arriving at truth, and finally understands criticism not as an end, but as an integral moment within the interpretation of the human experience of existence and reality. John MacQuarrie astutely recognizes the significance of interpretation within a context marked by plurality and difference when he writes:

There is all the difference in the world between the a comprehensiveness that has seriously faced differences and sought to embrace the very truth expressed in the difference itself, and a vacuousness which, by accepting every point of view, denies any truth claim to all of them.⁴⁰

The postcritical strives for a comprehensiveness that is developed via critical dialogue with difference. Neither a logic that governs the precritical nor the critical attitude is equipped to handle the complexities of interpreting unity and diversity within a pluralistic and global world.

3 – Mystery, Symbol, and a Second Naïveté for Western Thought

Postcritical thought and theology strive to attend to the whole of human experience. As such, postcritical thought and theology not only focus on experiences that are empirically verifiable, but also listens to the “mysterious” aspects of human experience that are not easily interpreted and appropriated. Attending to the mysterious establishes space for the possibility of difference, but a difference that is mediated

⁴⁰John Macquarrie, *Christian Unity and Christian Diversity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), 47.

through the familiar. The interpretation and appropriation of mystery requires a logic governed by symbol that provides the potential for thinking one *and* many as opposed to the one *over* many or as the many over one, as in the case of the precritical and critical approaches, respectively.

3.1 – *Mystery and Western Thought*

A logic governed by the one over the many directs metaphysic and ontology throughout most of the history of Western thought, especially since Plato and Aristotle. The contemporary postmodern mindset, however, is markedly different. Influential thinkers such as Jacques Derrida (1930 – 2004), Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005), Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995), and Jean-Luc Marion (1946 – present), to name only a few, continue to take up Martin Heidegger’s critique of Western thought in a variety of ways and provide contemporary challenges to traditional objectivistic metaphysical and ontological foundations and presuppositions of Western thought and theology.

3.1.1 – *Onto-Theo-Logy and the Ontological Difference*

Martin Heidegger claims that Western thought takes a fundamental misstep when it formulates the concept of ‘Being’⁴¹ as universal, indefinable, and self-evident.⁴²

Wrathall and Murphey observe in *An Overview of Being and Time* that,

[f]rom Aristotle to Descartes and beyond, for instance, both human beings and nonhuman things were understood to be alike in that they were *substances*:

⁴¹ The use of Being – with a capital B – as opposed to being – with a lower case b – in Heidegger’s work is significant. For the sake of consistency and clarity it should be noted that being designates an entity or thing, Being designates existence, and *Dasein* designates that entity for which its Being is an issue. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans., John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: HarperPerennial/Modern Thought, 2008), 67-68.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 22-24.

discretely individuated, self-sufficient entities that possess determinate properties and stand in contingent, external relations to one another.⁴³

The well-founded observation that traditional Western thought interprets 'Being' via a metaphysical logic of substantial ontology is taken up by Heidegger in his seminal work *Being and Time*. Heidegger contends that the traditional metaphysical understanding of 'Being' is only one of three modes or ways of being. He maintains that Western thought has come to think of Being only in terms of *Vorhandenheit* and overlooks *Dasein* and *Zuhandenheit*.⁴⁴

Vorhandenheit, or presence-at-hand, is a derivative mode of Being and is indicative of entities that "we discover when we abstract from our practical engagement with the world and take up a reflective or theoretical or scientific attitude towards it."⁴⁵ According to Heidegger, from Aristotle onwards Western thought increasingly thinks of Being as an individuated "substance" that is present-at-hand. Simply put, Western thought envisions Being as an entity alongside other entities. However, Heidegger recognizes that:

The Being of entities 'is' not itself an entity. If we are to understand the problem of Being our first philosophical step is... in not 'telling a story' that is to say, in not defining entities as entities by tracing them back in their origin to some other entities, as if Being had the character of some possible entity.⁴⁶

Heidegger's fundamental critique of Western thought is that it envisions existence as an entity. Being is not a thing or an object; there is no such "thing" as "to be", but Western

⁴³ Mark A Wrathall and Max Murphey, "An Overview of Being and Time," in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger's Being and Time*, ed. Mark A. Wrathall (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 4.

⁴⁴ Heidegger defines *Dasein* "as an entity which does not occur among other entities. Rather, it is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an issue for it. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 32. *Zuhandenheit* or "readiness-to-hand is the way in which entities as they are 'in themselves' and defined ontologico-categorically. Ibid., 101.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 9.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 26.

thought has forgotten this.⁴⁷ The forgetfulness of Being in the West establishes thought that gives priority to conceptual interpretations of existence over practical engagement and culminates in modern science and technology. The distinction between Being and entities is famously coined by Heidegger as the “ontological difference”.⁴⁸ Summarizing the unfolding of the ontological difference in Western thought, Louis-Marie Chauvet writes:

[f]rom the moment [being] is conceived as at the base of all entities, being necessarily and simultaneously “twins” into a unique *summit*; it refers to the a first entity – the Good or the One (Plato); the divine (Aristotle); God in God’s very self, absolute entity, “uncreated being” (*ens increatum*) (Aquinas); both “first cause” (*causa prima*) and “ultimate reason” (*ultima ratio*) (Leibniz); “beginning and “end” (*arche* and *telos*) – that cannot be this without being “its own cause” (*causa sui*). Thus from its inception with Plato, metaphysics appears to have been... a kind of thinking which everywhere ponders the entity as such and justifies it within the totality of being as foundation.⁴⁹

Forgetting the ontological difference leads to thinking that is “onto-theo-logical.” That is, Western thought confuses the domains of theology and philosophy by contaminating

⁴⁷ Despite subsequent interpretations of Aquinas there is an undeniable thread of the apophatic tradition within his writings. In particular, Aquinas draws upon the works of Pseudo-Dionysius. According to Pseudo-Dionysius, “God is known... both through knowing... and through not-knowing... Of it there is understanding, reason and knowledge, touch, sense-perception, opinion, imagination, name and everything otherwise. Yet it is neither understood nor spoken nor named. It is not something amongst beings. Neither is it known as something amongst beings. It is ‘all in all’ (1 Cor. 15: 28), and nothing in nothing: from all things it is known to all, and from nothing it is known to no one... Moreover, knowing by not-knowing... is the most divine knowledge (gnosis) of God. According to union beyond understanding, whenever the mind is withdrawn from all being, and has been set free itself, then it is united with the brightness beyond light, being enlightened then and there by the unsearchable abundance of wisdom.” As quoted in Micahel Craig Rhodes, *Mystery in Philosophy: An Invocation of Pseudo-Dionysius* (New York Lexington Books, 2012), 3.

⁴⁸ See: Martin Heidegger, “The onto-Theo-Logical Constitution of Metaphysics,” in *Identity and Difference* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002).; Martin Heidegger, “The Principle of Difference,” in *Identity and Difference* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002).

⁴⁹ Louis Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament : A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1995), 27.

theology with ontology and ontology with theology.⁵⁰ Merold Westphal writes that, “it is in modernity's wedding of science and technology that onto-theology has its greatest triumph, placing the world at its disposal, first conceptually and then practically.”⁵¹ Aristotle initiates the problem of onto-theo-logy by envisioning Metaphysics as both ontology and theology. Jeffrey Robbins articulates how Western metaphysics is onto-theo-logical when he writes:

Metaphysics comes to its limits and recognizes the abyss over which it stands. Thus, in order to give account of its ungrounded ground, it makes appeal to a logic not its own, and therefore metaphysics becomes theological. Theology, on the other hand, seeks to know the Supreme Being, which is by nature unknowable and ungraspable. God is wholly other. Thus, in order to make its faith secure, it speaks of God as though God belonged to the order of knowledge, and therefore theology becomes metaphysical.⁵²

While Heidegger's call for a strict separation between philosophy and theology is overstated, his central insights are correct. Firstly, the positing of an ungrounded ground in philosophy amounts to a conceptual limit that resolves the problem of an infinite regress. The mystery of Being proper to philosophy is thus resolved by positing a foundational principle (God). In so doing, philosophy takes what does not belong to it from the domain of theology and reduces the infinite possibilities of the mystery of Being to an object that is conceptually knowable. Secondly, when Western theology appropriates, explains, and understands the ungraspable alterity of the Christian God by *beginning* with metaphysics and ontology, it subsumes the radical otherness of God -

⁵⁰ Heidegger contends that there is distinct divide between ontology and theology. He writes: “Man can neither pray nor sacrifice to this god. Before the *causa sui*, man can neither fall to his knees in awe nor can he play music and dance before this god.” Heidegger, “The onto-Theo-Logical Constitution of Metaphysics,” 72.

⁵¹ Merold Westphal, “Onto-Theology. Metanarrative, Perspectivism, and the Gospel,” in *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn Six Views*, ed. Myron Penner (Grand Rapids: Baker Pub. Group, 2005), 145.

⁵² Jeffrey W. Robbins, “The Problem of Ontotheology: Complicating the Divide between Philosophy and Theology,” *The Heythrop Journal* 43: 144.

known through Revelation - to conceptual and theoretical knowledge that is known independently from Revelation. On the one hand, Western theology upholds the primacy of revelation and acknowledges the limits of human reason. Yet, on the other hand, when it does speak of God, it tends to be rationalistic and attempts to resolve the mystery of God.⁵³

Theology and philosophy, however, need not be hermetically sealed off from one another, as there is a basic affinity between them. They share a common undertaking in so far as they seek to articulate mystery. On the other hand, the proper “object” of theology (God) and the proper “object” of philosophy (Being) are interpreted from different vantage points, belong to different domains, adhere to different methods, and maintain different commitments. As Heidegger astutely observes, confusing the two leads to thinking that is self-enclosed. Onto-theo-logical thought keeps “itself secure from the complicating truth of mystery, the ever-illusory realm of the unthought, the absence of presence, or the presence of absence.”⁵⁴ The forgetfulness of the ontological difference is essentially equivalent to the forgetfulness of mystery and it is precisely the ‘complicating truth of mystery’ that postcritical thought and theology must attend to in

⁵³Western thought uses the philosophical data of the mystery of existence and the theological data of the mystery of God and applies them to one another as if they belong to the same domain. However, the data gained through reason and the data of Revelation are not synonymous with one another, nor do they appropriately resolve the mystery proper to theology and philosophy. John Paul II recognizes the interconnectivity of philosophy and theology while also upholding the rightful autonomy of each. He writes, “Were theologians to refuse the help of philosophy, they would run the risk of doing philosophy unwittingly and locking themselves within thought-structures poorly adapted to the understanding of faith. Were philosophers, for their part, to shun theology completely, they would be forced to master on their own the contents of Christian faith, as has been the case with some modern philosophers. Either way, the grounding principles of autonomy which every science rightly wants guaranteed would be seriously threatened.” John Paul II, “Fides Et Ratio,” *Inside the Vatican*, no. Special Issue (1998).

⁵⁴ Robbins, “The Problem of Ontotheology,” 141.

order to speak intelligibly within a world that is increasingly marked by the realities of pluralism and globalization.

3.1.2 – *Reclaiming Mystery*

The desire of contemporary Western thinkers to overcome onto-theo-logy and to reinvigorate mystery emerges out of three interrelated observations.⁵⁵ Firstly, there is recognition of an abiding elusive quality to existence, reality, and human experience that is not easily understood, explained, and appropriated.⁵⁶ Secondly, there is recognition that human reason is limited and contingent. Lastly, there is recognition that uncovering the significance of experience, reality, and existence is not strictly bound to the interpretative province of abstract and conceptual thought. These insights initiate a call for renewed attention to the tacit aspects of human experience and to an interpretation of mystery that extends beyond conceptual mastery towards openness to the difference of the 'other'.

The tacit experience of mystery challenges the limits and relative rational safety of traditional metaphysical/ontological thought. Regarding the relationship between human thought and mystery, Karl Rahner observes:

The mystery is self-evident... Existentially... it is at once a menace to man and his blessed peace. It can make him chafe and protest, because it compels him to leave the tiny house of his ostensibly clear self-possession, to advance into the trackless spaces, even in the night. It seems to ask too much of him, to overburden him with monstrous claims. It forces upon him the dilemma of either throwing himself into the uncharted, unending adventure where he commits

⁵⁵ The Expression 'onto-the-ology' was coined by Martin Heidegger and extensively examined in his work: Heidegger, "The onto-Theo-Logical Constitution of Metaphysics."

⁵⁶ For critiques of Onto-Theo-logy see: Westphal, *Overcoming onto-Theology*; Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 7-45; John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon, *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.; Sheehan.

himself to the infinite, or – despairing at the thought and so embittered – of taking shelter in the suffocating den of his own finite perspicacity.⁵⁷

Mystery orients and confronts the human person with meaning. Mystery is neither a tentative reality nor a provisional reality. Instead, mystery is the unshakable reality that encounters and threatens the human person with what is radically other and unmanageable. This confrontation with mystery reveals the limits and radical dependence of the human person and human knowledge. For human persons, this single aporetic experience of mystery is at once an experience of the infinite and finite.

Phillip Gleeson affirms that, “‘Mystery’ is a word which warns us against placing false limits and boundaries.”⁵⁸ As such, the interpretation and appropriation of mystery requires hermeneutic caution and restraint despite the tendency in Western thought and theology to reduce mystery to what is wholly unknowable (infinite) or to a problem that simply lacks the proper knowledge at present, but will find future resolution (finite). As the above observations testify, mystery is experienced as a reality that is infinitely knowable.⁵⁹ The justification and merits of understanding mystery as infinitely knowable will become apparent in the subsequent reflection; however, a few basic remarks are in order relative to this provisional and observational claim. Firstly, an approach to mystery that is governed by the logic of traditional Western metaphysical/ontological thought cannot provide an adequate hermeneutic for interpreting mystery alone. Traditional Western thought, which culminates in modern criticism, interprets reality by subsuming

⁵⁷ Karl Rahner, “The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology,” in *More Recent Writings*, Theological Investigations (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), 58.

⁵⁸ Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins, and Dermot A. Lane, *The New Dictionary of Theology* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1991), 692.

⁵⁹ Heidegger develops a similar definition of Mystery when he writes: “that which shows itself and at the same time withdraws is the essential trait of what we call mystery.” Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 55.

what is other under the auspices of a common system or framework and reduces what is other and different to the same and familiar. In this case, unity is given priority over difference. Secondly, an approach to mystery that is governed by the logic of contemporary Western postmodern thought and adopts a propensity for critical deconstruction and suspicion does not provide an adequate hermeneutic for interpreting mystery either. In the case of postmodern thought, difference is upheld as a good in and of itself. As such, postmodern thought tends to adjudicate difference an importance above unity.

Postcritical thinking requires a hermeneutic that is rigorous enough to explicate and expound mystery and also adaptable and tentative enough to avoid the temptation of conceptually dominating mystery. A hermeneutic for a postcritical theology recognizes the significance of the believer, the situation or context of the believer, and the knowledge of the believer. Postcritical thought and theology inhabits the relational space between the subjectivity and objectivity. Melvin Keiser explains that:

Although we may choose to begin a theology from some explicit principle, our actual starting point is not any articulate form of our creativity but the realities of our living. We live and think from our tacit indwelling of reality. Although we know various aspects of reality by drawing tacit patterns into explicit forms, the fullness of reality forever transcends all our formalizing activity. To live from tacit commitment is to live in mystery.⁶⁰

Postcritical thought and theology begins with the recognition that before conceptual knowledge is possible, a prior relational structure already exists between the human being, the situation of the human being, and the tacit knowledge of the experience.

3.2 Gabriel Marcel and Recollection

⁶⁰ Melvin Keiser, "Beginning Where We Are: The Postcritical Starting Point of Systematic Theology," *Religion and Intellectual Life* 5, no. 4 (1988): 79.

Both Martin Heidegger and Gabriel Marcel share a common conviction that modern Western thought leaves little, if any, room for mystery and wonder. While Heidegger uncovers a space within Western thought for mystery through his recognition of the ontological difference, the philosophical reflections of Gabriel Marcel provide key insights for a postcritical articulation of mystery via his understanding of the distinction between the “problematic” and the “mysterious” and his understanding of “recollection”.

Marcel’s general distrust of the modern program is directed towards its promise of universal objectivity. Marcel’s critique of Western thought, however, is not directed towards Metaphysics *per se*; instead, Marcel takes issue with the unchecked confidence and privileged status modernity gives to conceptual knowledge as the sole arbiter of truth.⁶¹ According to Marcel, modernity overestimates the autonomy and centrality of critical thought and threatens to extinguish the human being’s longing for the mysterious and subsequent reflection trained on it.

The decline in the attention given to mystery is proportional to the increased emphasis on conceptual knowledge arrived at through criticism. Marcel writes:

In such a world the ontological need, the need of being, is exhausted in exact proportion to the breaking up of personality on the one hand and, on the other, to the triumph of the category of the "purely natural" and the consequent atrophy of the faculty of *wonder*.⁶²

Marcel, however, is not advocating for the abandonment of criticism.⁶³ In fact, Marcel recognizes the indispensable need for criticism within the economy of reflection, but he decries the modern belief that one arrives at truth *only* through criticism animated by

⁶¹ See: Kenneth T. Gallagher, "Metaphysics as Mystery: From Kant to Marcel," in *God Knowable and Unknowable*, ed. Robert J. Roth (New York: Fordham University Press, 1973).

⁶² Gabriel Marcel and Brendan Sweetman, *A Gabriel Marcel Reader* (South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine's Press, 2011), 24.

⁶³ Marcel and Descartes Brendan Sweetman, *The Vision of Gabriel Marcel: Epistemology, Human Person, the Transcendent* (New York: Rodopi, 2008), 7-21.

doubt that culminates in abstraction from practical engagement with the world.⁶⁴ Critical thought is essential but not central to reflection and “experience cannot fail to transform itself into reflection.”⁶⁵ Within the economy of reflection, there are three interrelated moments: personal experience, primary reflection, and secondary reflection or recollection. The first way of reflecting is proper to the domain of the purely natural. Primary reflection deals with the problematic and interprets reality and existence by breaking apart personal experience into manageable segments. In this sense, primary reflection abstracts the originally unified aspects of experience and “tends to dissolve the unity of experience which is first put before it.”⁶⁶ Put another way, primary reflection interprets experience in a way that tends toward the discovery of objective certainty by establishing an existential space or distance between the subject and the object. Brendan Sweetman defines primary reflection as:

...“ordinary” everyday reflection, which employs conceptual generalizations, abstractions, and an appeal to what is universal and verifiable. This kind of reflection aims at abstracting from our everyday situation, and seeks “public” concepts that are accessible to everyone in the same way regardless of their actual “situated involvement” in existence. This type of reflection typically deals with *problems* of various kinds that confront human beings in the course of their daily lives.⁶⁷

Not all experiences of the human being, however, are easily objectified and abstracted.

There are experiences that, because the human being is personally caught up in them,

⁶⁴ Reflection for Marcel is simply paying attention to experience, which, for the human being, is always and fundamentally situated within the concrete world; human being is always a concrete being-in-a-situation. The experience of human being is embodied and concrete. The concrete situation of the human being, however, does not necessitate that the human being arrives at meaning immediately in and through the concrete objects of the world. *Ibid.*, 23-38; Marcel and Sweetman, *A Gabriel Marcel Reader*, 73-76.

⁶⁵ Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being, Volume 2: Faith and Reality* (South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine's Press, 2001), 83.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 84. p. 84

⁶⁷ Sweetman, *Vision of Marcel*, 56.

cannot be held at a safe and objective distance. Such experiences are meaningful insofar as they reveal truths about the reality of human existence and resist objectification.

While Marcel upholds that truth is a reality for the human being, he challenges the necessity and possibility of arriving at universal truth via universal objective methods. Arriving at universal objective truth requires a universal objective method that disregards the personal, sociocultural, and intellectual horizon of a given time and place.⁶⁸ Marcel writes:

There is every reason to suppose that we remain dominated by an image of truth as something extracted – extracted or smelted out exactly as a pure metal is extracted from a mixed ore. It seems obvious to us... that there are established, legitimate ways of arriving at truth... it is however, this very image of truth as something smelted out that we must encounter critically if we want to grasp clearly the gross error on which it rests.⁶⁹

Marcel does not argue that truth is an illusion, nor does he argue that truth is relative; instead, he advocates for the recognition of truth as a reality that differs from objects. As such, one should not expect truth to adhere to the interpretative techniques associated with the manipulation of objects. For instance, the experience of birth is rightfully interpreted differently by both a delivering doctor and a delivering mother. A good doctor must adhere to an objective interpretation of birth. Hence, a good doctor appropriates the objective explanation of birth and subsequently understands the birthing procedure objectively. This allows the doctor to anticipate and respond to problems that may arise during birth. The delivering mother, on the other hand, need not know anything about the objective birthing process in order to interpret the experience as

⁶⁸ It is common in Western thought and theology to interpret truth as though it were an object or a thing. A universally valid truth necessitates a universally valid and repeatable technique for arriving at truth and is accomplished by reducing truth to an observable object that is obtained through a process of extraction, or better abstraction, from the human being's personal experience.

⁶⁹ Marcel, *Mystery of Being II*, 19.

meaningful. If asked, the doctor can reduce many of the truths of the experience of birth to objective information; the mother, however, is likely to have difficulty reducing the experience to objective details. An essential difference between objective truth and the actual experience of truth is that objects are reducible while experience is unified and irreducible. Marcel explains:

This irreducibility we must keep a grip on if we want to get beyond the illusory image of truth as a physical object, a substance, the contents of a vessel, a mere thing, and to recognize that the impossibility of adequately representing by material images those processes by which I can both conceive a true proposition and affirm it to be true.⁷⁰

Reflection on irreducible experience is proper to secondary reflection or recollection. This manner of reflecting focuses on and seeks to uncover or re-collect the meaning of the originally unified experience of the human being. Recollection transcends the objective certainty sought in primary reflection because the knowledge appropriate to recollection is the mysterious experiences of life that are pre-reflectively or tacitly known. Secondary reflection pulls together what was abstracted, pulled apart, and previously objectified; it is "...best understood as both the act of critical reflection on primary reflection, and the process of recovery of the "mysteries of being."⁷¹ Through recollection one becomes aware of what is otherwise unthinkable and neglected by primary reflection.⁷² The human being intuitively knows more than she or he can grasp in and through primary reflection and knows mystery without mastering it objectively.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 20.

⁷¹ Marcel and Sweetman, *A Gabriel Marcel Reader*, 19.

⁷² Marcel sometimes calls this awareness intuition. See: *ibid.*, 62-66.

As infinitely knowable Mystery is “a problem that encroaches upon its own data, that invades the data and thereby transcends itself as a simple problem.”⁷³ Recollection thus calls for an investigation and interpretation that recognizes the infinite in the finite circumstances of experience and in so doing transcends the distinctions and methods of primary reflection that is trained upon the problematic.⁷⁴ Marcel writes:

The recognition of mystery... is an essentially positive act of the mind, the supremely positive act in virtue of which all positivity may perhaps be strictly defined. In this sphere everything seems to go on as if I found myself acting on an intuition which I possess without immediately knowing myself to possess it – an intuition which cannot be, strictly speaking, self-conscious and which can grasp itself only through the modes of experience in which its image is reflected, and which it lights up by being reflected in them. The essential metaphysical step would then consist in a reflection upon this reflection. By means of this, thought stretches toward the recovery of an intuition which otherwise loses itself in proportion as it is exercised.⁷⁵

Mystery is properly ontological if one considers “Being [existence] as the principle of inexhaustibility.”⁷⁶ This is justified if one recognizes that fundamental questions about the meaning of existence and reality are inexhaustible, but arise within the concrete and natural world. The distinction between a problem and a mystery is one of range and scope. Addressing the distinction between the mysterious and the problematic, Marcel writes:

A problem is something met with which bars my passage. It is before me in its entirety. A mystery, on the other hand, is something in which I find myself caught up and whose essence is therefore not to be before me in its entirety. It is as

⁷³ Gabriel Marcel, *Gabriel Marcel's Perspectives on the Broken World : The Broken World, a Four-Act Play : Followed by Concrete Approaches to Investigating the Ontological Mystery*, Marquette Studies in Philosophy (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1998), 178.

⁷⁴ Gabriel Marcel, *Being and Having*, trans., Katherine Farrer (Nabu Press, 2014).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 118.

⁷⁶ It is important to note that Marcel does not use the terms ontological, metaphysics, being etc. as they are commonly understood in philosophical discourse. While he is committed to using a metaphysical/ontological register, Marcel goes through great lengths to reinterpret commonly used philosophical terms within an existential/phenomenological context. *Ibid*

though in this province the distinction between in me and before me loses its meaning.⁷⁷

The human being discovers one's-self in recollection on mystery. Mystery grabs a hold of the human person before the human person can grab a hold of mystery. Hence, mystery presents itself as an unanticipated gift that confronts, constructs, and constitutes the human being.⁷⁸ A problem, however, is understood, appropriated, and explained *by* the human being within the context of defined and pre-established limits.

Roger Hazelton distills three characteristics of mystery based on Marcel's analysis. Firstly, a mystery has personal value.⁷⁹ The experience of mystery is significant to the individual; it matters to the human being. There is a personal closeness or proximity between the human being and mystery that is absent in the case of the problem. Reflection on Mystery begins with the human being as subject, but as a subject that is already personally implicated and caught up in the inquiry. In recollection, the human being cannot abstract one's self from their experience of mystery. Mystery is a reality that presents existential significance and meaning when it is experienced and therefore cannot be held away at a safe distance and examined like the object of scientific enquiry.

⁷⁷ Marcel, *Being and Having*, 76.

⁷⁸ The notion of the gift is extensively discussed as a central theme in the phenomenology of Jean-Luc Marion. Marion's notion of the gift is key to his understanding of the saturated phenomenon, which is similar to the understanding of mystery that is proposed here. The fundamental difference between mystery as it is understood in this work and Marion's philosophical thought regarding the saturated phenomenon rests on Marion's conviction that the Human person, or the Gifted one, is radically passive. Marion's phenomenology is ill equipped to deal with the realities of free will and choice of the human person. Marion's project to remove being, ontology, and subjectivity from philosophy and theology leads to the development of a system that accords freedom and priority to the "other". See: Marion, *In Excess*; Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given : Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2002); Jean-Luc Marion, *Reduction and Givenness : Investigations of Husserl, Heidegger, and Phenomenology*, Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1998).

⁷⁹ Roger Hazelton, "Marcel on Mystery," *The Journal of Religion* 38, no. 3 (1958): 159.

Secondly, there is a positive reason why mystery cannot be objectified or problematized.⁸⁰ Mystery transcends objectification because of its surplus of meaning.

Marcel writes:

It is also worth noticing that I who ask questions about Being do not in the first place know either if I am nor *a fortiori* what I am. I do not even clearly know the meaning of the question 'what am I?' though I am obsessed by it. So we see the problem of Being here encroaching upon its own data, and being studied actually inside the subject who states it. In the process, it is denied (or transcended) as problem, and becomes metamorphosed to mystery.⁸¹

Mystery, in a manner of speaking, interprets the human being. It presents inexhaustible meaning and significance to the human being.

Lastly Hazelton notes that something is a mystery "if my being [existence] is involved in it."⁸² As discussed above, the distinction between the internal and the external loses its significance in the experience of mystery. It is a call towards the discovery of one's vocation. Mystery not only confronts the human person with meaning, it also issues a call and demands a response from the human being. Hence, mystery's call, which demands a response, implies the human being's capacity to interpret and appropriate. Only through interpretation and appropriation can the human being "become" what mystery calls one to be.

Gabriel Marcel's phenomenological analysis of human experience provides important insights for the development of postcritical thought by demonstrating the human being's need for mystery and the subsequent necessity of reflection on mystery via recollection. As such, he moves beyond the typical attempts in Western thought to critically appropriate reality and existence and provides an entry point into the realm of

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Marcel, *Being and Having*, 89.

⁸² Hazelton, "Marcel on Mystery," 159.

mystery. Marcel endeavors to provide a phenomenological description of mystery and “to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself.”⁸³ Thus, Marcel teaches that mystery is lived before it is thought and that the reductive and totalizing systems of thought typical of the West are not appropriate for reflection on mystery. The call to recollect the lived experience of mystery in secondary reflection exceeds the boundaries and competency of a logic that attempts to understand, explain, and appropriate by categorization and abstraction, a logic that subsumes difference into totalizing structures and places the one over the many.

Is it possible to discern or interpret the paradoxical experience of mystery rather than abstractly speculate about it? Melvin Keiser summarizes the activity of postcritical reflection:

Postcritical reflection begins not with abstraction but with interpretation. As thinking emerges from tacit commitments, we ask about what is going on: What is the context of our tacit indwelling; what is the direction of our form-shaping emergence; what is the meaning of our lived faith? “Don’t think but look” ...⁸⁴

Postcritical reflection begins with phenomenological description, but requires a hermeneutic for interpretation. Everything that appears within the horizon of experience for the human being, including mystery, is intelligible only through language and language in turn demands interpretation.⁸⁵ It is to the activity of a postcritical interpretation that the discussion now turns.

⁸³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 58.

⁸⁴ Keiser, "Beginning Where We Are," 78.

⁸⁵ Paul Ricoeur, like Marcel, begins with phenomenological observation and subsequently interprets what is observed. However, Ricoeur understands and explains the phenomena of language and interpretation in relation to one another. There is no language that is not interpreted and there is no interpretation without language. “In general terms, every mythos involves a latent logos which demands to be exhibited. That is why there are no symbols without the beginning of interpretation; where one man dreams, prophesies, or poetizes, another rises up to interpret”; Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 19.

3.3 Paul Ricoeur, Symbol, and the Second Naïveté

The relationships between lived experience, interpretation, and discourse are taken up in the philosophic thought of Paul Ricoeur and center on his hermeneutic theories of symbol and interpretation. Ricoeur recognizes that reflection requires some degree of intelligibility and intelligibility requires interpretation. Ricoeur's early theory of hermeneutics and the interpretation of symbols and his later conviction that hermeneutics extends to the interpretation of discourse as a whole provide insights and resources that are indispensable for the development of postcritical thought and theology that reflects upon mystery.⁸⁶ Ricoeur's theory of interpretation allows for the possibility of thinking the one *and* the many by establishing a productive dialectic tension between primary reflection on the problematic and recollection on mystery. This, in turn, accords the opportunity for thinking unity and difference outside of the confines of both the principle of one *over* many and the unbridled difference of postmodernity.

Ricoeur, like Marcel, endeavors to reach back and recollect the originally unified experience of mystery. This reaching back, however, does not capture original experience immediately and instead it must be mediated through symbol and language. Hence, what Marcel terms secondary reflection or recollection Ricoeur recognizes as a moment that calls for interpretation in order to bring such experiences to intelligibility via symbol. Ricoeur writes:

We know the harassing backward flight of thought in search of the first truth and, more radically still, in search of a point of departure that might well not be a first truth. The illusion is not in looking for a point of departure, but looking for it without presuppositions. A meditation on symbols starts from speech that has already taken place, and in which everything has already been said in some fashion; it wishes to be thought with its presuppositions. For it, the first task is not to begin but, from the midst of speech, to remember; to remember with a view to

⁸⁶ Karl Simms, *Paul Ricoeur* (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 30.

beginning.⁸⁷

This section develops Ricoeur's philosophic reflection on symbol and its subsequent need for interpretation. In particular, this section claims that a postcritical interpretation 1) does not begin with or seek only to discover the static common principles of primary reflection, but instead begins with the contingent presuppositions of language and 2) remembers or recollects the experience of mystery via a logic that is governed by symbol.

3.3.1 – Symbolic Meaning

As reflection trained upon mystery, recollection or secondary reflection requires unique interpretative strategies because mystery is never fully exposed and always remains hidden in some sense. Mystery, however, does become intelligible via the symbol while remaining free from concepts. According to Ricoeur a symbol is “any structure of signification in which a direct, primary, literal meaning designates, in addition, another meaning which is indirect, secondary, and figurative and which can be apprehended only through the first.”⁸⁸ A symbol, thus, arises out of a dialogue of meanings that require two distinct, yet interrelated, moments of interpretation: literal and symbolic. The interpretation of symbols thus presents difficulty for traditional Western thought for three reasons: 1) symbols are opaque, 2) symbols are culturally contingent, and 3) symbols depend on, but are not limited to, problematical interpretation.⁸⁹

Firstly, “the symbol remains opaque, not transparent, since it is given by means of

⁸⁷ Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 348-349.

⁸⁸ Paul Ricoeur, *From Text to Action* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 12-13.

⁸⁹ Paul Ricoeur, "The Hermeneutics of Symbols and Philosophical Reflection: II," in *The Conflict of Interpretations* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 317.

an analogy based on literal signification.”⁹⁰ Accordingly, there is a complexity of meanings for symbol. A symbol presents one meaning that is literal and a second meaning that is hidden and mysterious. As the above attests, Western thought traditionally accords preference to interpretations that rely on clear and distinct categories and concepts. Hence, Western thought tends to favor the first meaning that is literal and immediate and attempts to extend the interpretation proper to the literal meaning to the second symbolic meaning. In effect, this obliterates the second opaque, hidden, and mysterious meaning by forcing a reduction upon it, disregarding it, or simply ignoring it. There is, however, an immediacy of the first meaning that is not characteristic of the second meaning, and the second meaning is arrived at only through the first meaning. As such, the immediacy of the first meaning mediates the second meaning. Patrick Bourgeois writes:

Symbol is the movement of the primary meaning making us share in the latent meaning, thus assimilating us to the symbolized without our being able to intellectually dominate the similarity. This is one sense which the symbol “gives”; it “gives” because it is a primary intentionality giving the second meaning.⁹¹

As a symbol, water, for instance, carries a double meaning. In its literal sense, water is experienced as the universal solvent and cleanser, it is a source of food and nourishment, it alleviates thirst, it gives life, it takes life, etc. These various meanings literally and immediately belong to water. As symbol, however, water also embodies all at once the mysterious complexities of life, death, the human desire for spiritual cleansing, etc. Water carries a deeper and mysterious meaning because of and through its literal meaning. In other words, because the human being literally experiences water as life-

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Patrick Bourgeois, "From Hermeneutics of Symbol to the Interpretation of Texts," in *Studies in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, ed. Charles E. Reagan (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1979), 86.

giving and life-taking and because life and death are meaningful realities for the human being, water can present deeper questions about the mysteries of reality and existence. Hence, the human being not only interprets water as a symbol, but water also interprets the human being.

Secondly, the symbol is a prisoner of the diversity of languages and cultures and, for this reason, remains contingent.”⁹² The symbol offends the Western preoccupation with and desire for necessity. Symbolic interpretation does not seek to establish nor does it begin with what is necessary, but instead starts in the midst of language that already exists in a diversity of ways. Symbolic interpretation begins with a wager that is closer to an educated guess than it is to the conceptual certainty sought after by modernity.

Ricoeur writes:

I wager that I shall have a better understanding of man and the bond between the being of man and the being of all beings if I follow the *indication* of symbolic thought. That wager then becomes the task of *verifying* my wager and saturating it, so to speak with intelligibility. In return, the task transforms my wager: in betting *on* the significance of the symbolic world, I bet at the same time *that* my wager will be restored to me in the power of reflection, in the element of coherent discourse.⁹³

As such, all discourse, including symbolic discourse, begins with presuppositions. Honest discourse makes these presuppositions explicit by stating them as belief, and wagers that the belief will pay off in understanding.⁹⁴ Thus, Ricoeur articulates the hermeneutic circle, “we must understand in order to believe, but we must believe in order to understand.”⁹⁵ Symbols are thought with and through the particularity of sociocultural

⁹² Ricoeur, "The Hermeneutics of Symbols and Philosophical Reflection: II," 317.

⁹³ Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 355.

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, 357.

⁹⁵ *ibid.*, 351.

and intellectual presuppositions.⁹⁶

Lastly, “the symbol is given to thought only by way of interpretation which remains inherently problematical.”⁹⁷ There is a double intentionality characteristic of the symbol. The symbol intends meaning beyond, but only through its literal meaning. It intends what is other than itself, at least literally or objectively speaking. Through a meaning that is properly its own, the literal signifier presents or gives a meaning that is not its own but is intelligible. Succinctly put, “What the symbol gives, gives rise to thought.”⁹⁸ Ricoeur writes:

That sentence (“the symbol gives rise to thought”) which enchants me, says two things: the symbol gives; but what it gives is occasion for thought, something to think about... But what the symbol gives rise to is thinking. After the gift, positing. The aphorism suggests at the same time that everything has already been said enigmatically and yet that it is always necessary to begin everything and to begin it again in the dimension of thinking. It is this articulation of thought given to itself in the realm of symbols and of thought positing and thinking that constitutes the critical point of the whole enterprise.⁹⁹

The symbol speaks the mystery that cannot be spoken literally and speaks the mysterious without dominating or reducing it and in so doing articulates what is infinitely knowable. The second intentionality does not belong only to the literal carrier of the secondary or mysterious meaning. Returning to the example of water, it cannot present itself as symbol without its literal meaning and the existential meaning that the human being

⁹⁶ This is similar to Gadamer’s understanding of tradition. Gadamer writes, “A reflection on what truth is in the human sciences must not try to reflect itself out of the tradition whose binding force it has recognized. Hence in its own work it must endeavor to acquire as much historical self-transparency as possible. In its concern to understand the universe of understanding better than seems possible under the modern scientific notion of cognition, it has to try to establish a new relation to the concepts which it uses. It must be aware of the fact that its own understanding and interpretation are not constructions based on principles, but the furthering of an event that goes far back. Hence it will not be able to use its concepts unquestioningly, but will have to take over whatever features of the original meaning of its concepts have come down to it.” Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: A & C Black 2013), xxiii.

⁹⁷ Ricoeur, “The Hermeneutics of Symbols and Philosophical Reflection: II,” 317.

⁹⁸ Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics* (Polity Press, 2013), 6.

⁹⁹ Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 348-349.

brings as well. Without human beings and the ontological exigency, there are no symbols. Water would cease to be a symbol that expresses the mystery of life and death if there were no human beings longing to make sense of their reality and existence or if human beings no longer found life and death meaningful.

3.3.2 – *The Need for Interpretation*

Symbols articulate the mystery of reality and existence, bringing intelligibility to otherwise non-intelligible experiences that lie beyond the conceptual grasp of primary reflection. Because symbols are polysemic and articulate mystery, they require an interpretation that is governed by a logic different from that of problematic and a logic of the one and the many. Symbols require interpretation that is continuous and indefinite.

Interpretation for Ricoeur “is the work of thought which consists in deciphering the hidden meaning in the apparent meaning, in unfolding the levels of meaning implied in the literal meaning.”¹⁰⁰ The unfolding levels of meaning are uncovered through the interrelated hermeneutic activities of explanation, understanding, and appropriation. There is a dialectic tension between understanding and explanation and their respective relationships to meaning. “In explanation we ex-plicate or unfold the range of propositions and meanings, whereas in understanding we comprehend or grasp as a whole the chain of partial meanings in one act of synthesis.”¹⁰¹ Hence, explanation corresponds to the activity of primary reflection while understanding corresponds to the activity of recollection. The process of interpretation, however, is not one-directional. Instead, interpretation is a dialogic process whereby an initial understanding is furthered through explanation in a constant oscillation between understanding and explanation.

¹⁰⁰ Ricoeur, *From Text to Action*, 13.

¹⁰¹ Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth, Tex: Texas Christian Univ. Press, 1976), 72.

Ricoeur writes:

The first time, understanding will be a naïve grasping of the meaning of the text as a whole. The second time, comprehension will be a sophisticated mode of understanding, supported by explanatory procedures. In the beginning understanding is a guess. At the end it satisfies the concept of appropriation... as the rejoinder to the kind of distancing linked to the full objectification of the text. Explanation will appear as the mediation between two stages of understanding. If isolated from this concrete process, it is mere abstraction, an artifact of methodology.¹⁰²

Hence, in the case of mystery, the process of interpretation, the oscillation between explanation and understanding, is endless, but not hopeless. Interpretation, which is the dialectic process of explanation and understanding, relies on symbols within the larger cultural context from which symbols emerge. Through interpretation it becomes possible for the human being to appropriate mystery without mastering and conceptually reducing it to a problem. In short, “it is by interpreting that we can hear again.”¹⁰³

The need to “hear again” arises out of the tension and distance between otherness and ownness.¹⁰⁴ Ricoeur calls this tension distancing, which “is not a quantitative phenomenon; it is the dynamic counterpart of our need, our interest, and our effort to overcome cultural estrangement.”¹⁰⁵ It is through a *productive* distancing that appropriation is possible; a productive “distance” between otherness and ownness allows for the appropriation of the “other” through the interpretative process of explanation and understanding. Ricoeur writes:

This dialectic may also be expressed as that of tradition as such, understood as the reception of historically transmitted cultural heritages. A tradition raises no philosophical problem as long as we live and dwell within it in the *naïveté* of the first certainty. Tradition only becomes problematic when this first *naïveté* is lost.

¹⁰² Ibid., 74-75.

¹⁰³ Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 351.

¹⁰⁴ See: Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 1-25.

¹⁰⁵ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*, 43.

Then we have to retrieve meaning through and beyond estrangement. Henceforth the appropriation of the past proceeds along an endless struggle with distancing. Interpretation, philosophically understood, is nothing else than the attempt to make estrangement and distancing productive.¹⁰⁶

It is precisely this productive distancing that postcritical thought and theology seek to access through an interpretation governed by a logic of symbol with the hope of a new and constructive appropriation of the other in its identity as other. The goal is not assimilation, but appropriation as a second naïveté.

3.3.3 – *The Second Naïveté*

A fundamental question that confronts contemporary Western thought and theology is “What comes after criticism?” Interpretation governed by a logic of symbol establishes the possibility of a second naïveté or a “mediated immediacy.”¹⁰⁷ The movement from the loss of precritical belief via its confrontation with modern criticism through the critical deconstructive activity of postmodernity can now be assessed in a positive and constructive manner. Ricoeur describes the transition / movement from precritical belief when he writes:

The dissolution of the myth as explanation is the necessary way to the restoration of the myth as symbol. Thus, the time of restoration is not a different time from that of criticism; we are in every way children of criticism, and we seek to go beyond criticism by means of criticism, by a criticism that is no longer reductive but restorative.¹⁰⁸

This restoration is particularly important for theological discourse as it is not sufficient to simply explain prior Christian understanding. It must also take up the task of *appropriating* prior understanding so as to make it comprehensible within a new context. In this sense theology demands both a critical retrieval of its inherited beliefs and

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 44.

¹⁰⁷ See below.

¹⁰⁸ Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 350.

understandings as well as a creative interpretation of the received tradition. A fundamental task of contemporary theological discourse is, thus, the appropriation of the Christian tradition amidst a pluralistic and globalized world. Ricoeur summarizes:

For the second immediacy that we seek and the second naiveté that we await are no longer accessible to us anywhere else than in hermeneutics; we can believe only by interpreting... Such is the hermeneutic circle: hermeneutics proceeds from a prior understanding of the very thing that it tries to understand by interpreting it. But thanks to that circle in hermeneutics, I can still communicate with the sacred by making explicit the prior understanding that gives life to interpretation.... I believe that being can still speak to me – no longer, of course, under the precritical form of immediate belief, but at the second immediacy aimed at by hermeneutics. The Second naiveté aims to be the postcritical equivalent of the precritical hierophany.¹⁰⁹

4. Conclusion

The realities of pluralism and globalization require an attentiveness to both unity and difference that precritical, modern, and postmodern thought are ill-equipped to offer. Instead, the changing sociocultural and intellectual context calls for thinking that is postcritical and symbolic. The relationship between unity and difference, when understood postcritically, draws upon a logic governed by symbol that allows for thinking the one *and* the many by acknowledging the significance of mystery as a genuine source of knowledge.

These observations provide important resources for Western thought and theology and highlight the significance of the hermeneutic activities of understanding, explanation, and appropriation. Having developed the need for postritical thought, the task of appropriating such thought within Western theological discourse must now be undertaken.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 352.

CHAPTER TWO

KARL RAHNER'S LOGIC OF SYMBOL AND POSTCRITICAL THEOLOGY

1. Introduction

As theological discourse enters the Third Millennium, it is apparent that the larger sociocultural and intellectual context of Western Christianity is shifting. On the one hand, this shift exhibits a scientific rationality indicative of the sociocultural and intellectual values of modernity and, on the other hand, this shift embraces a pluralistic rationality characteristic of the sociocultural and intellectual values of postmodernity. The confrontation between the ideologies of modernity and postmodernity yields a tension for the contemporary person in the West whereby the realities of unity and difference are in persistent yet illusory struggle for supremacy over one another. This tension, which is particularly evident in contemporary Western theological discourse, prepares the foundations for artificial systems of thought that tend to reduce reality to either unexplainable difference in the case of postmodernity, or explainable unity in the case modernity. Both reductions deprive reality of its fullness and significance. As the first chapter argues, postcriticism's logic, unlike modernity's logic of the one *over* the many and postmodernity's logic of the *many* over the *one*, appropriates unity and difference via an interpretation that is mediated by the relationship between the one *and* the many and as such attends to the possibility of unity-in-difference.

Western theological discourse, if it is to be successful and relevant within its present context, requires an attitude towards knowledge and reason that 1) originates in the mysterious and multifaceted experience of being human, 2) humbly recognizes reality's surplus of meaning, and 3) can be spoken in courage and faith without the desire

or need to speak completely or with finality. A theology that is postcritical must learn to reside in the interstitial space between the hermeneutical and the transcendental so as to profit from the creative tension between the two.¹¹⁰ Postcritical theology takes advantage of the human being's capacity for mystery and interpretative faculties in order to explain, understand, and appropriate the relationship between the human being's transcendent experience of radical openness to God and the limits of existence within the concrete circumstances of the world without obliterating the difference between them.

Contemporary theological discourse is in need of interpretative strategies that navigate the dynamic movement between world/spirit, openness/limitedness, and unity/diversity and ultimately think beyond criticism towards a constructive hermeneutic space; a hermeneutic space that coincides with the possibility of a mediated belief or a second naïveté. Theological discourse, which always attends to the relationships between the mysterious realities of God, humanity, and creation, must traverse between the hermeneutical insofar as it is discourse that is bound and rooted in the concrete circumstances of the world and transcendental insofar as its "object" of discourse is the encounter with the mysterious "other".

This chapter argues that Karl Rahner's foundational thought and theological method, which are governed by a logic of symbol, provide meaningful resources for

¹¹⁰ Describing the hermeneutic and the transcendent William Thompson writes, "In the broad sense... the hermeneutical refers to the view that the truth of reality... emerges indirectly, through the 'other' of phantasm, objects, form, history, tradition, culture, society and community. Reality's truth is always mediated, in other words. And because it is it demands a form of interpretation, since the otherness of its mediation means that truth's significance is not immediately apparent. The transcendental... refers to the view that reality's truth can manifest itself to the knowing subject through subjectivity. The truth of reality is the subject's self-presence in a certain valid sense. And because it is, there is a certain kind of immediacy between knower and known." William M. Thompson, "Word & Spirit, Hermeneutics & Transcendental Method: Exploring Their Connections in Karl Rahner," *Philosophy & Theology* 7, no. 2 (1992): 187.

postcritical theological discourse. Rahner's thought and theology are unabashedly concerned with the appropriation of Christian belief amid the changing context of history and is the consequence of explicit pastoral motivations and implicit hermeneutic concerns. As such, Rahner understands the importance and necessity of confrontation and dialogue between the Christian tradition as it is received and the unique concerns and problems of human beings within their pluralistic sociocultural and intellectual context. Rahner's theological method echoes John XXIII's conviction that "the substance of the ancient doctrine of the Deposit of Faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented another."¹¹¹ Reflecting upon his theological life's work, Rahner admits:

My life work, if we can call it that, has had no plan, proposed in advance, but was strongly influenced by the needs of the day... I would plainly and simply say that I am a Catholic Christian, I am attempting to reflect on my faith and relate it to the questions, needs and difficulties which confront me as a man and a Christian. From this everything else flows... I really have endeavored to pursue a theology that looks to concrete proclamation in the Church, to dialogue with people of today.¹¹²

Rahner's interest with the appropriation of the Christian tradition in a globalized and pluralistic world manifests itself in a theological method that is inherently dialogical and implicitly interpretive.¹¹³ Rahner contends that the human being's experience of mystery, which is constitutive of human existence and *only* encountered in the world, provides the foundation for theology and is provisionally and tentatively expressed in theological

¹¹¹ John XXIII, "Address of Pope John XXIII at the Solemn Opening of the Second Vatican Council," in *Council Daybook: Vatican II*, ed. James O'Connor (Washington D.C.: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1966), 27.

¹¹² Karl Rahner, *Karl Rahner in Dialogue* (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 334.

¹¹³ While Rahner is generally labeled a systematic theologian, his writings, with the exception of *Foundations*, are collections of articles, essays, and lectures. The occasional nature of Rahner's writings make it difficult to establish a definitive system of thought. While there are general themes that Rahner develops and appear throughout his writings, his work remains difficult to systematize as a whole.

discourse.¹¹⁴ Rahner writes that, “[w]hether he is consciously aware of it or not, whether he is open to this truth or suppresses it, a man’s whole spiritual and intellectual existence is oriented towards a holy mystery which is the basis of his being.”¹¹⁵

Rahner uncovers an intimate connection between transcendental and categorical experience, both of which are grounded in God’s Holy Mystery. Attentiveness to the relationship between the categorical and the transcendental forms a remarkably grounded yet flexible framework for approaching and developing theological discourse and points to the hermeneutical and transcendental tendencies in Rahner’s theological method; a method that, as the following demonstrates, is governed by a logic of symbol and allows for the articulation of the human being’s experience of mystery as a “mediated immediacy”.¹¹⁶

The intention of this chapter is twofold. Firstly, this chapter develops a general sketch of Karl Rahner’s foundational thought and theology and its significance for postcritical theological discourse. An analysis of Rahner’s understanding of the human being as 1) “spirit-in-the-world”, 2) openness to revelation, and 3) the event of God’s grace accomplishes this first task. Secondly, this chapter demonstrates that Rahner’s logic of the symbol provides a hermeneutic that understands, explains, and appropriates unity-in-difference in his theological method and also provides a suitable hermeneutic for postcritical theological discourse.

¹¹⁴ In this sense, Rahner understands human existence as fundamentally hermeneutic. He writes, “[W]hen the reality of man is understood correctly, there exists an inescapable circle between his horizons of understanding and what is said, heard and understood.” Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1993), 24.

¹¹⁵ Karl Rahner, “The Need for a ‘Short Formula’ of Christian Faith,” in *Writings of 1965-1967, I*, Theological Investigations (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 122.

¹¹⁶ Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 84-86.

2. – The Theological Foundations of Karl Rahner

There is a fundamental and complex relationship between anthropology and theology that is distinctive of Rahner's theological method.¹¹⁷ On the one hand, Rahner's theological method is deeply rooted in the concrete circumstances of the world. On the other hand, his theology is the fruit of intense reflection upon mystery. Anne Carr writes:

Rahner's formal reflections on theological method develop by a dual dynamism. One movement is toward complexity and differentiation as he defines the various components of Christian theology - revelation, Scripture, tradition, dogma, and theology itself. The other, opposite, drive is toward simplicity and integration as he points with increasing emphasis to the experience of the single mystery of God's self-communication to man which lies behind the propositions of dogma and the words of scripture, "the gospel behind the gospel."¹¹⁸

The dual dynamism towards unity and difference, which is characteristic of Rahner's theology and method, centers on the human being as "reference to Mystery, the experience of which has foundational theological significance."¹¹⁹

Anne Carr details three interrelated and successive moments that illustrate Rahner's theology and method. Each of these moments elucidates Rahner's abiding concern for the human being's experience of mystery and its relationship to the meaningfulness of existence.¹²⁰ While initially philosophical, these successive moments become increasingly theological. In a first step, Rahner recognizes that human existence

¹¹⁷ It is important to note that while Rahner continues to use a traditional metaphysical/ontological register, he makes a shift from "an object – focused theory of being... to a correlation – focused theory of meaning." Hence, when Rahner uses the term 'being' he means meaningfulness. "[B]eing as phenomenologically reduced: the intelligible in terms of the conditions constituting intelligibility." Thomas Sheehan, "Rahner's Transcendental Project," in *Cambridge Companions to Religion*, ed. Declan Marmion and Mary E. Hines (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 20-21.

¹¹⁸ Anne Carr, "Theology and Experience in the Thought of Karl Rahner," *The Journal of Religion* 53, no. 3 (1973): 368.

¹¹⁹ Harvey Egan, "Mysticism and Karl Rahner's Theology," in *Theology and Discovery: Essays in Honor of Karl Rahner, S.J.*, ed. William J. Kelly (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1980), 142.

¹²⁰ Anne Carr, *The Theological Method of Karl Rahner* (Missoula, MN: Scholar Press, 1977), 59-124; Carr, "Theology and Experience in the Thought of Karl Rahner."

is fundamentally experienced as “spirit-in-the-world.”¹²¹ He subsequently develops a philosophy of religion that envisages the human being as having a real “potency” for hearing for a “Word” from God within history. Lastly, Rahner describes the universality of God’s gracious offer via the “supernatural existential.”¹²²

2.1. – *Spirit-in-the-World and the Human Capacity for Mystery*

In an initial philosophical step, Rahner envisions human existence as spirit-in-the-world or as embodied spirit and subsequently establishes a transcendental turn to the subject for theology.¹²³ This transcendental turn re-envisions traditional Christian anthropology by explaining and understanding human existence as a complex coadunation between infinite openness to “holy mystery” and the radical limits of bodily existence. Human existence is characteristic of a unity-in-difference and is illuminated via the activity of human knowing for Rahner. Thomas Sheehan recognizes that human knowledge is fundamentally relational for Rahner. Sheehan writes that the human being:

... is an otheredness that is always self-related, and a self-relatedness that cannot exist without being othered. Since relation-to-another is the only way humans can relate to themselves, we may define human being as *self-related otheredness*. “Self-relatedness” means self-awareness and self-responsibility – in a word, spirit. “Otheredness” means that human beings *need* to be affected by others – but are *limited* to being affected only by this-worldly corporal others. In Rahner’s phrase “Geist in Welt,” a this-worldly spirit that cannot see beyond, or exist without – much less leave- this material world.¹²⁴

¹²¹ According to Rahner there is “an inescapable *unity in difference between one’s original self-possession and reflection*.” Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 15. As spirit-in-the-world, the human being comes to realize self-possession through reflection on experience that always and only occurs in the concrete circumstances of the world. It is in the concrete bodily experience of the world that the human being realizes and enacts one’s-self as spirit. This is possible, according to Rahner, because there is an original relationship between knowledge and existence or being and knowing.

¹²² Carr, “Theology and Experience in the Thought of Karl Rahner,” 361-364.

¹²³ Rahner provides an in depth philosophical analysis of the human as an embodied spirit in *Geist* this a distinctive feature of Rahner’s theology method in theology, Burke, Eco.

¹²⁴ Sheehan, 18.

Rahner upholds the Thomistic identity between knowing and being such that “[k]nowing is the being-present-to-self of being, and this being-present-to-self is the being of the existent.”¹²⁵ As such, knowing is subjectivity in so far as knowing one’s-self is being one’s-self. However, Rahner does not envision knowledge and subjectivity in terms of the isolated Cartesian subject. Instead, the human being comes to self-knowledge and self-possession only through knowledge of an “other”; human beings come into their own being – “become” what they are – only in and through the sensible world. The human being’s search for and discovery of meaning is restricted, for good or ill, to the concrete sensible world of bodily existence as spirit-in-the-world. Hence, it is necessarily through the concrete experience of the world that the human being knows one’s-self as a transcendent being.¹²⁶

2.1.1 – *Questioning and the Transcendental Capacity of the Human Being*

The human being enacts and manifests the dynamic and relational structure of human existence as spirit-in-the-world in the activity of questioning.¹²⁷ Questioning is the one simple and fundamental fact of human existence. Rahner writes:

Man questions. This is something final and irreducible. For in human existence the question is that *fact* which *absolutely* refuses to be replaced by another fact, to be reduced back to another fact and thus unmasked once again as being itself derivative and provisional. For every placing-in-question of the question is itself

¹²⁵ Karl Rahner, *Spirit in the World* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 69.

¹²⁶ The use of the term “transcendental” by Rahner is not always consistent. It is not uncommon for Rahner to shift between two different usages. In the first instance, Rahner uses transcendental in its most common understanding as that which transcends or is beyond what is typically expected or beyond experience. Rahner, however, also uses the term philosophically as the *a priori* and necessary conditions of the possibility for a particular experience. See: Karen Kilby, *Rahner : Theology and Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2004), 32-48.

¹²⁷ The ability to ask a question such as “what is this?” is significant for Rahner and his inquiry into human knowledge and existence. When something like the above question is asked, it reveals both an awareness of a particular – a “this” – and an awareness of a universal – a “what”. Abstraction is essentially the capacity to recognize a universal within a particular or place a particular under the category of a universal. Questioning ultimately requires a tacit *a priori* knowledge of universals.

again asking a question, and thereby a new instance of the question itself. So the question is first of all the only “must”, the only necessity, the only thing beyond question to which questioning man is bound, the only circle in which questioning is caught, the only apriority to which it is subject. Man questions necessarily.¹²⁸

As such, “the infinite horizon of human questioning is experienced as a horizon which recedes further and further the more answers man can discover.”¹²⁹ Everything can at least be a question for the human being, including questions about one’s own existence. In a particularly significant way, questions about the ultimate meaning of existence reveal the transcendent capacity of the human being. Michael McCabe describes the transcendental capacity of the human being when he writes:

[t]he transcendental element, this implicit orientation to an unlimited horizon, is found in all human activities, in our questioning and questing, our willing and loving. We are restless, dynamic beings, always moving towards a larger horizon, always on the way.”¹³⁰

Rahner terms the transcendental element of human experience and knowledge the *Vorgriff*, or pre-apprehension of being.¹³¹ The *Vorgriff* is a capacity of the “spirit” where

¹²⁸ Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, 57.

¹²⁹ Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 32.

¹³⁰ Michael McCabe, “The Mystery of The Human: A Perspective from Rahner,” in *Christian Identity in a Postmodern Age*, ed. Declan Marimion (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2005), 50.

¹³¹ According to Rahner, “The *Vorgriff* is the condition of possibility of the universal concept, of abstraction... It is an *a priori* power given with human nature. It is the dynamic movement of the spirit toward the absolute range of all possible objects. In this movement, single objects are grasped as single stages of this finality; thus they are known as profiles against this absolute range of all the knowable. On account of the *Vorgriff* the single object is always already known under the horizon of the absolute ideal of knowledge and posted within the conscious domain of all that which may be known. That is why it is also known as not filling this domain completely, and hence limited.” Karl Rahner, *Hearers of the Word* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 47-48. Rahner continues, “There are in the history of Western philosophy three typical directions in which an answer to this question has been attempted: the direction of the perennial philosophy which, in this case, goes from Plato to Hegel, the direction of Kant, and that of Heidegger. There first one answers: the range of the *Vorgriff* extends toward being as such, with no inner limit in itself, and therefore includes also the absolute being of God. Kant answers: the horizon of sense intuition, which does not reach beyond space and time. Heidegger says: the transcendence which serves as the basis from man’s existence, goes towards nothingness.” Ibid., 49.

spirit is understood as “the power which reaches out beyond the world and knows the metaphysical.”¹³² However, the *Vorgriff* is not an object alongside other objects of knowledge. Kilby clarifies possible misconceptions regarding the *Vorgriff* and objective knowledge:

[i]t is of critical importance... not to confuse the kind of awareness we have of being and of God with our knowledge of finite objects... the being of which we are aware in the *Vorgriff* is never known or grasped or disposed of in the way that individual beings can be – it never becomes an object of knowledge itself, but remains always only that which we are aware *in* knowing concrete objects.¹³³

In short, it is not possible to “abstract” the *Vorgriff* from human knowledge. Without the pre-apprehension of being (*Vorgriff*), there would be no authentic human knowledge because both the limits of the categorical and the infinite possibilities of the transcendental are necessary “ingredients” for human knowledge.

2.1.2 – *Mystery and the Provisional Nature of Human Knowing*

The human being tacitly recognizes or pre-apprehends absolute being and reaches beyond one’s limits towards the infinite horizon of possibility in the activity of questioning. Hence, objective knowledge is only possible because of the broader horizon of an ever-present and eternal *mystery*. Rahner explains that:

[b]asically he is always on the way. Every goal that he points to in knowledge and in action is always relativized, always a provisional step. Every answer is always just the beginning of a new question. Man experiences himself as infinite possibility because in practice and in theory he necessarily places every sought-after result in question. He always situates it in a broader horizon which looms before him in its vastness. He is spirit who experiences himself as spirit in that he does not experience himself as *pure* spirit. Man is not the unquestioning and unquestioned infinity of reality. He is the question which rises up before him, empty, but really and inescapably, and which can never be settled and never be adequately answered by him.¹³⁴

¹³² Rahner, *Spirit in the World*.

¹³³ Kilby, *Rahner : Theology and Philosophy*, 20.

¹³⁴ Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 32.

Human knowledge and existence arise at the intersection between the experience of mystery and the experience of the categorical and sensible world.¹³⁵ Hence, with Gabriel Marcel, Rahner recognizes that the finitude of being in the world and the concreteness of human existence are not conditions that simply present as problems for human beings to overcome. Instead, the human being is “the perfection of finitude, a finite infinity that consists not in God’s all-at-once-ness but in our own finite infinity: unlimited self-synthesizing, self-mediation, and self-interpretation, unlimited responsibility, knowledge, and creativity.”¹³⁶ In this sense, the meaning of human existence is always in process and is always receptive to the ungraspable “more” that is mediated through the immediacy of the concrete world. As spirit-in-the-world, human existence is surely limited, but within the limits of concrete bodily existence the human being, as spirit, has the capacity to reach beyond or transcend the immediacy of bodily experience and inquire about the meaningfulness of experience and existence.¹³⁷

Rahner’s transcendental observations on the human being as spirit-in-the-world elucidate the human openness and capacity for mystery in the midst of finitude. In fact, mystery, as it is transcendently experienced within human existence, obtains via a

¹³⁵ Karl Rahner, “Behold This Heart!": Preliminaries to a Theology of Devotion to the Sacred Heart," in *The Theology of the Spiritual Life*, Theological Investigations (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1967), 323.

¹³⁶ Sheehan, 41.

¹³⁷ Human freedom and responsibility are not absolute. Rahner recognizes that freedom is always in some sense a limited freedom, but is nevertheless a real freedom. Rahner writes, “What it really means to be something other than God and nevertheless to have come from him radically and in one’s deepest self, what it means to say that the radical dependence grounds autonomy, all of this can be experienced only when a spiritual, created person experiences his own freedom as a reality, a freedom coming from God and freedom for God. Not until one experiences himself as a free subject responsible before God and accepts this responsibility does he understand what autonomy is, and understand that it does not decrease, but increases in the same proportion as dependence on God.” Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 78-79.

complex unity whereby the human being anticipates the infinite in and through concrete engagement with the finite world.¹³⁸

Taken in isolation, Rahner's contention that human knowledge and existence obtain because of mystery suggests or at least raises the concern that ultimately there is no distinction between theology and philosophy. It is legitimate to question whether Rahner's metaphysics of knowledge suggests that the human being can come to know mystery via one's own intellectual power or if the human being's capacity for knowledge owes itself to the *revelation* of mystery. In short, Rahner's metaphysics of knowledge recognizes the importance of mystery within human knowing, but he says little about the origins of mystery and how the human being interprets an encounter with mystery.

2.2 – *Hearers of the Word and Hermeneutics*

The second step in Rahner's foundational thought and theology elucidates the *possibility* of revelation.¹³⁹ As spirit-in-the-world, Rahner explores the human being's openness to mystery and capacity for transcendence: however, the possible hearing of a revelation, which for the human being must occur in history, is not expounded.¹⁴⁰ Rahner anticipates the possibility of a historical revelation at the end of *Spirit in the World* when he writes:

¹³⁸ Summarizing Rahner's position, Mark Fischer writes, "In transcendental experience, there is an intuition of God. Granted this intuition is not always conscious of itself. The one who has it may not even know that it is an intuition of God. But that knowledge is still present. How? Because whenever we are aware of ourselves as knowers or seekers trying to understand the mystery of life, then God is present in that self-awareness: present as mystery, as the absolute incomprehensible source of all that is. What we know in knowing anything is that our knowledge is a small vessel in a vast sea of mystery. Our knowledge, small and incomplete, owes its existence to that vast sea as the mystery that bears it up." Mark F. Fischer, *The Foundations of Karl Rahner: A Paraphrase of the Foundations of Christian Faith, with Introduction and Indices* (New York: Crossroad Pub. Co., 2005), 6.

¹³⁹ The term "revelation" is used rather generically in this section.

¹⁴⁰ Rahner, *Hearers of the Word*, 15.

In order to be able to hear whether God speaks, we must know that He is; lest His word come to one who already knows, He must be hidden from us; in order to speak to man, His word must encounter us where we already and always are, in an earthly place, at an earthly hour. Insofar as man enters into the world by turning to the phantasm, the revelation of being as such and in it the knowledge of God's existence has already been achieved, but even then this God who is beyond the world is always hidden from us.¹⁴¹

2.2.1 – *Revelation, Theology, and Philosophy*

Revelation presupposes theology and theology presupposes philosophy.¹⁴² Put another way, "If revelation is to occur, it must be a historical event, commensurate with man's way of knowing and being in the world."¹⁴³ Hence, for Rahner the transcendental turn in theology is also an anthropological turn in so far as the prior condition for the possibility of theology is that the human being is spirit-in-the-world and thus at least open to a possible revelation.

From the standpoint of theology, which in its primary sense is the original hearing of God's revelation and is only subsequently systematized and arranged by human beings, the relationship between theology and philosophy is one that centers upon the human being.¹⁴⁴

As soon as man is understood as the being who is absolutely transcendent in respect of God, 'anthropocentricity' and 'theocentricity' in theology are not opposites but strictly one and the same thing, seen from two sides. Neither of the

¹⁴¹ Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, 408.

¹⁴² Karl Rahner, "Philosophy and Theology," in *Concerning Vatican Council II*, Theological Investigations (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1969), 79.

¹⁴³ Carr, "Theology and Experience in the Thought of Karl Rahner," 363. Rahner writes, "revelation... is heard by a human being who already knows other things besides this revelation, a revelation which does not occur always and everywhere but only here and now. But the hearing of the message by a someone who already has other knowledge can only be possible... in confrontation with this other knowledge, however definitive this confrontation may be; it is hearing by means of categories already possessed from elsewhere, a reception within previously given horizons, however much these horizons themselves may be altered by this hearing; in other words, it is already an active effort of thought by man; in short, it is theology, however much this theology may in certain circumstances be thought of as being subject also to the direction and control of the original process of revelation." Rahner, "Philosophy and Theology," 73.

¹⁴⁴ Carr, "Theology and Experience in the Thought of Karl Rahner," 90.

two aspects can be comprehended at all without the other. Thus, although anthropocentricity in theology is not the opposite of the strictest theocentricity, it is opposed to the idea... that it is possible to say something about God theologically without thereby automatically saying something about man and vice versa....¹⁴⁵

The mysterious “other” must initiate revelation but from the vantage point of the human being, the possibility of revelation necessitates the capacity to listen for a revelation from the mysterious “other”. However, because human knowledge is fundamentally in the world, a word from God as the absolute mysterious “other”, if it is to be heard, must occur within the horizon of the human being’s experience, which is fundamentally historical. Hence, “[w]hen the reality of man is understood correctly, there exists an inescapable circle between his horizons of understanding and what is said, heard, and understood.”¹⁴⁶ The human being cannot hear outside a word that is outside of the human being’s horizon of understanding.

Rahner maintains that, “theology itself implies a philosophical anthropology which enables this message of grace to be accepted in a really philosophical and reasonable way, and which gives account of it in a humanly responsible way.”¹⁴⁷ Hence, the possibility of theology presupposes philosophy in so far as philosophy is “in the strictest sense... is the methodologically exact, reflected and most expediently controlled representation and articulation of this original and never quite attained self-understanding.”¹⁴⁸ Philosophy can ask about the possibility of revelation; however, it cannot say whether an actual revelation has taken place in history, nor can such a philosophy anticipate the content of revelation.

¹⁴⁵ Karl Rahner, "Theology and Anthropology," in *Writings of 1965-1967, 1*, Theological Investigations (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 28.

¹⁴⁶ Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 24.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁴⁸ Rahner, "Philosophy and Theology," 74; Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 25.

2.2.2 – *The Necessity of Hermeneutics in Rahner's Foundational Thought*

Rahner develops his argument for the *possibility* of historical revelation by way of three fundamental propositions in *Hearers of the Word* and in so doing also upholds the necessity of hermeneutics within theological discourse.¹⁴⁹

Firstly, Rahner draws upon the philosophical observation from his previous work, *Spirit in the World*, and reaffirms that the human being has the capacity to reach beyond the world from within the world. Thus he concludes that:

...the proposition about the necessarily explicit transcendence of knowledge correlative to being in general as the basic constitution of man as spirit, is the *first* proposition of a metaphysical anthropology, an anthropology that is slanted towards a philosophy of religion as foundation for the possibility of a verbal revelation.¹⁵⁰

Succinctly put, the openness and receptivity of the human being to mystery is the necessary condition for a possible revelation.

Secondly, the human being's openness and receptivity to mystery does not necessitate a revelation, but instead points to the necessity of anticipating it as a possibility. Because of the openness and receptivity to mystery, the human being, on the one hand, *must* question to obtain as a subject; that is to realize one's-self as being-present-to-self. On the other hand, however, the human being must *question* because one's being-present-to-self is limited and dependent on the "other"; the being-present-to-self of the human being owes itself to the mystery that is not entirely one's own. Hence, "[i]n this framework God is not seen as an immovable ideal, but as a free autonomous power."¹⁵¹ Revelation requires both the free initial activity of God and the free and

¹⁴⁹ Christopher F. Schiavone, *Rationality and Revelation in Rahner: The Contemplative Dimension* (New York: P. Lang, 1994), 67-75.

¹⁵⁰ Rahner, *Hearers of the Word*, 67.

¹⁵¹ Schiavone, *Rationality and Revelation in Rahner: The Contemplative Dimension*, 72.

unrestricted openness of the human being to receive God's revelation. Revelation, properly understood, is both freely given and freely received. Rahner concludes that:

... man is that existent thing who stands in free love before the God of a possible revelation. Man is attentive to the speech or the silence of God in the measure in which he opens himself in free love to this message of the speech or the silence of the God of revelation. He hears this message *only if* he has not restricted the absolute horizon of his openness to being in general by a perverted love, only if he has not removed in advance the possibility of the word of God addressing him as he pleases, of meeting him in the form he desires to assume.¹⁵²

Thirdly, Rahner affirms the significance of human historicity.¹⁵³ For Rahner, freedom and responsibility always go hand in hand.¹⁵⁴ Listening for a possible word of revelation from God necessitates a responsible freedom on the part of the human being. Because human beings realize and actualize themselves in history and in the world, such listening requires attentiveness to the existential situation of the human being.

The human being comes to self-realization and is self-actualized in and through the world, time, and space. Hence, history and the world for the human being are ultimately and inescapably existential conditions whereby the human being "even as doer and maker is still receiving and being made."¹⁵⁵ The human being becomes both person and subject in the world and in time and space. Thus, Rahner affirms that a revelation must be a historical revelation if the human being is to be open and receptive on the one hand and able to freely respond on the other. Rahner maintains that:

Man is the existent thing who must listen for an historical revelation of God, given in his history and possibly in human speech... Man is one who listens in his history for the word of the free God. Only thus is he what he must be.

¹⁵² Rahner, *Hearers of the Word*, 108.

¹⁵³ Rahner defines historicity as "that characteristic and fundamental determination of man by which he is placed in precisely as a free subject, and through which a unique world is at his disposal, a world which he must create and suffer in freedom, and for which in both instances he must take responsibility." Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 41.

¹⁵⁴ See: *ibid.*, 35-39.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.

Metaphysical anthropology has thus reached its conclusion when it has comprehended itself as the metaphysics of *potetia oboedientialis* for the revelation of the supernatural God.¹⁵⁶

Hence, Rahner's understanding of the human being as the hearer of a possible revelation from God reimagines the traditional concept of *potetia oboedientialis* (obediential potency) in Christian philosophy. Classically explained, obediential potency is the "openness of every creature to the Creator's power to effect in it something beyond its powers of ordinary natural causes."¹⁵⁷ However, the traditional explanation of obediential potency neglects the hermeneutic capacity of the human being. The traditional explanation of obediential potency in Western theology fails to account for: 1) how the human being can understand, explain, and appropriate God's radically foreign otherness, 2) why the human being is compelled to look for a possible revelation, and 3) why the human being is open and receptive to a possible revelation from God as the fulfillment of human knowledge.¹⁵⁸

Rahner addresses the above concerns by upholding and demonstrating that the transcendental and historical nature of the human being forms a unity-in-difference. In so doing, he affirms that the *human* being is a *hermeneutic* being and as such is fundamentally interpretive. As the entity who listens for a possible revelation in history, the human being is also that entity who must interpret and appropriate mystery.

Theology, both in the primary sense of listening to a word from God and in its classic sense of "faith seeking understanding", necessitates an attentive and responsible reflection on the hermeneutic capacity of the human being. Because theology

¹⁵⁶ Rahner, *Hearers of the Word*, 161-162.

¹⁵⁷ *New Catholic encyclopedia* (New York,: McGraw-Hill, 1967), s.v. "New Catholic Encyclopedia."

¹⁵⁸ Schiavone, *Rationality and Revelation in Rahner: The Contemplative Dimension*, 68.

presupposes the capacity to listen for a mysterious word of God's grace within history and the world, neglecting the significance and necessity of hermeneutics ultimately endangers theology's tasks of hearing and of interpreting God's revelatory word. In sum, Rahner, like Paul Ricoeur, recognizes the significance and mediating function of one's place in history. The human being's spatio-temporal and socio-cultural position does not merely provide the "lens" through which the human being interprets experience; instead, the historical reality of the human being provides the possibility of interpreting in the first place. In short, "it is by interpreting that we can hear again."¹⁵⁹

2.3 – *The Supernatural Existential: The Human Being as the Event of Grace*

The third step in the development of Rahner's foundational thought and theology is what he terms the "supernatural existential."¹⁶⁰ The supernatural existential marks a shift in Rahner's thought towards concerns that are explicitly and primarily theological.¹⁶¹ The doctrine of the supernatural existential develops in relation to the debate over the relationship between nature and grace in Roman Catholic theology.¹⁶² From the perspective of theology, the transcendental capacity of the human being that is directed towards and also elicits the desire for God owes itself to the supernatural

¹⁵⁹ Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 351.

¹⁶⁰ The term existential is defined as "a permanent determination penetrating all elements of human existence, which reveals its meaning and structure, characterizing the human being before she engages in any free action." Ethna Regan, "Not Merely the Cognitive Subject: Rahner's Theological Anthropology," in *Karl Rahner : Theologian for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Pádraic Conway and Fáinche Ryan (Oxford: P. Lang, 2010), 127.

¹⁶¹ Rahner's metaphysics of knowledge and his articulation of the obediential potency of the human being for a historical revelation from God are both explicitly rooted in philosophical inquiry. The supernatural existential, while it takes up the logic that permeates these two previous moments, is developed and articulated within an explicitly theological context. Hence, for Rahner, the transcendental method demonstrates that philosophical and theological concerns are both moments of the same inquiry into the meaning of what it means to be human. Philosophy formulates questions regarding existence that can only be answered by theology and the answers that theology provides can only be properly understood in the context of the questions provided by philosophy.

¹⁶² Rahner, "Nature and Grace," 166-169.

existential; “supernatural’ because it is the initial step in God’s gratuitous self-communication, and ‘existential’ because, abidingly present to all, it permeates the totality of life.”¹⁶³ The supernatural existential ordains and alters the “nature” of the human being, directing the human being towards a supernatural end. Geoffrey Kelly writes:

Human nature is... enhanced in Rahner’s theology by his portrayal of the person being drawn by God beyond mere openness to being toward the attractive horizon of one’s most intensified aspiration, God’s own fulfilling existence in the free gift of God’s self. Rahner uses his theological construct of the supernatural existential to indicate that human nature with its openness to being – or, to borrow a traditional scholastic term, “obediential potency” for fulfillment in being – is transformed through the advent of God’s unending presence. In such a way, a person’s concrete existence or the “existential” becomes ordered to God and touched irrevocably by God.¹⁶⁴

Drawing upon the philosophical insights developed in both *Spirit in the World* and *Hearers of the Word*, Rahner argues against the extrinsicism of the Scholastic understanding of grace on the one hand and the position of *nouvelle théologie* that proposes an “unconditional reference of nature to grace” on the other hand.¹⁶⁵ Rahner’s abiding theological concern is to articulate and defend the universal saving will of God while also protecting the gratuitousness of God’s loving and free gift of God’s-self.

Firstly, Rahner observes that “human beings should be able to receive this love which is God: they must have a real congeniality for it. They must be able to accept it... as people who have room and scope, understanding and desire for it.”¹⁶⁶ The *Vorgriff*,

¹⁶³ Stephen Duffy, “Experience of Grace,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner*, ed. Declan Marmion and Mary E. Hines (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 34.

¹⁶⁴ Karl Rahner and Geoffrey B. Kelly, *Karl Rahner: Theologian of the Graced Search for Meaning*, The Making of Modern Theology (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 44.

¹⁶⁵ Patrick Burke, *Reinterpreting Rahner: A Critical Study of His Major Themes*, 1st ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 56.

¹⁶⁶ Rahner and Kelly, *Karl Rahner: Theologian of the Graced Search for Meaning*, 112.

theologically speaking, is the pre-apprehension or anticipation of God which is a reality for the human being because of God's free initial offer of God's self. This pre-apprehension is not an objective knowledge of God, but is better understood as "an unthematic but ever-present knowledge of the infinity of reality."¹⁶⁷ As such, the supernatural existential alters the natural transcendental horizon of the human being and reorients the human being towards the supernatural horizon of God's grace. This reorientation towards the supernatural horizon, however, "is not the object of an individual, a *posteriori* and categorical experience of man *alongside of* other objects of experience."¹⁶⁸ Instead and more precisely understood, the human being, before any kind of conceptual or thematic experience and expression, is tacitly aware that he or she is fundamentally "the event of God's absolute self-communication."¹⁶⁹

Secondly, "man or woman as God's real partner should be able to receive this love as what it necessarily is: as free gift."¹⁷⁰ The initial offer of supernatural fulfillment through God's loving and gracious gift of God's-self, not only reorients the transcendental horizon of human being, but also reorients human subjectivity. The concrete experience of the human being reveals that the human being is "more" than one's concrete experience. The tacit awareness of the supernatural existential of human existence manifests God's love as "gift and unexpected wonder."¹⁷¹ As the event of God's absolute self-communication, the human being, as subject, freely accepts or rejects God's gracious offer. The supernatural existential of the human being is thus the precondition for the human being's thematic belief in and relationship with God. Put

¹⁶⁷ Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 33.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 129.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 126.

¹⁷⁰ Rahner and Kelly, *Karl Rahner: Theologian of the Graced Search for Meaning*, 112.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 43-44.

succinctly, the supernatural existential, as God's initial offer, is the condition of possibility for accepting or rejecting God in the concrete circumstances of human existence. Rahner writes:

God's self-communication is given not only as gift, but also as the necessary condition which makes possible an acceptance of the gift which can allow the gift to really be God, and prevent the gift in its acceptance from being changed from God into a finite and created gift which only represents God, but is not God himself. In order to be able to accept God without reducing him, as it were, in this acceptance to our finiteness, this acceptance must be borne by God himself. God's self-communication as offer is also the necessary condition which makes its acceptance possible.¹⁷²

Hence, the supernatural existential is not owed to the human being nor is it expected, but because it is freely given, it irrevocably alters the human being. The abiding supernatural existential, which is possible because of God's initial promise of God's gracious initial self-gift, is the "secret ingredient" of transcendent experience that reveals itself in the mystery of human existence. As a consequence, the supernatural orientation of the human being allows for the human being to be God's partner. In short, the free and gracious offer of God elicits and provides for the possibility of a free and gracious response to the mystery that permeates the whole of human existence.

Thirdly, because of this central and abiding existential the relationship between nature and grace is, practically speaking, a hypothetical one, according to Rahner. The human being never experiences one's-self as pure nature nor does one encounter God's grace outside of the world. "[T]hose who receive this love... will know this very existential for this love as not owed to them, unexacted by them the real human beings."¹⁷³ The unexpected and unexacted experience of God's grace, which is always an experience in the world, reveals that the human being's capacity for grace exceeds the

¹⁷² Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 128.

¹⁷³ Rahner and Kelly, *Karl Rahner: Theologian of the Graced Search for Meaning*, 113.

natural capacity of the human being. In short, nature with respect to the supernatural existential is a remainder concept.¹⁷⁴ If one could hypothetically subtract the supernatural existential from human existence, pure nature would remain. However, this is never practically the case. Rahner writes:

There is no reason why it [the spiritual nature] could not retain its meaning and necessity even without grace if, on the one hand, one can learn to see it as the indispensable transcendental condition of the possibility of a spiritual life at all, and, on the other hand, this spiritual life, although in comparison with the beatific vision remains eternally *in umbris imaginibus* [in the shadows], can at any rate be shown to be neither meaningless nor harsh but can always be seen as a positive, though finite good which God could bestow even when he has not called man immediately before his face.¹⁷⁵

The relationship between nature and grace is ambiguous and uncertain because the experience of the human being is always already ordained towards God's grace.

Finally, Rahner's understanding of the supernatural existential explains that the human being's openness to God's grace is not a mere non-repugnance. Instead, the human being has a real affinity for grace; the human being has a real *potency* for God's grace.¹⁷⁶

2.4 – The Postcritical Significance of Karl Rahner's Foundational Thought

Karl Rahner's theological method provides several significant insights for theological thought that is postcritical. Firstly, Rahner recognizes that the existential situation of the human being is saturated with the mystery of radical "otherness". This existential situation is such that the human being's limitless hunger and thirst for knowledge and existence owes itself to an initial and unthematic encounter with God as the absolute mysterious other. Hence, the fundamental encounter with mystery lures the

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 115.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 114.

human being towards the necessity of interpretation in order to appropriate the infinite meaning and significance of existence within the experience of the limits of the concrete world.

Secondly, Rahner's foundational thought and theology avoid the typical objective and subjective extremes of Western theological discourse and establish a hermeneutic thrust that interprets and appropriates reality's surplus of meaning in light of both faith and reason. As the above articulates, Rahner's theological method is indicative of an inquiry that:

starts from the phenomenological presupposition that, before ever it is the question of God, theology is the question about the one who is able to raise the question of God, and for whom such a question might possibly have significance. For Rahner, an existential theology would proceed from "below" to "above."¹⁷⁷

Rahner's theological anthropology provides an articulation of the human being that does not limit faith to subjectivity nor reason to objectivity; instead, the human being is always in the midst of making sense of the personal encounter with mystery. Rahner thus articulates his own unique take on the hermeneutic circle.

It [Rahner's hermeneutic circle] consists of a view of man and his world, or nature, as already in dialectical unity (and thus abiding diversity) with grace, the self-communication of God in being and knowledge. Duality in unity is what man experiences in his being and activity and it is first opaque. But upon reflection, it opens to reveal the implicit differentiations which are the foundation upon which experience rests, the unthematized but conscious structures of existence.¹⁷⁸

Hence, theology and anthropology, subjectivity and objectivity, and nature and grace cannot be abstracted from one another within the real and lived experience of human existence. As such, anthropocentrism and theocentrism are not contrary positions within

¹⁷⁷ Michael Purcell, "Rahner Amid Modernity and Post-Modernity," in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner*, ed. Declan Marmion and Mary E. Hines (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 186.

¹⁷⁸ Carr, "Theology and Experience in the Thought of Karl Rahner," 365.

theological discourse. “Statements about God and about man are interconnected, but not only because of their content but also because of the nature of knowledge itself.”¹⁷⁹

Lastly, Rahner’s theological method acknowledges that all theological reflection begins and ends with mystery.¹⁸⁰ All theological formulas, propositions, and articulations are marked by the limitations of a particular time and place and call for a deepening and greater interpretation and appropriation of the mystery they communicate. Declan Marmion writes:

A theology that does not acknowledge this dimension of mystery, the *reductio in mysterium* or, more precisely, a ‘*reductio in mysterium Dei*’, of theological propositions, has, in his [Rahner’s] view, failed its true mission. It has failed to recognize the analogical nature of such theological propositions, and remained stuck on the conceptual level.¹⁸¹

All theological discourse, Rahner rightly acknowledges, is by its nature symbolic.

Theological discourse is rooted in and points towards the unfathomable otherness of the mystery of God. Hence, it must be kept in mind that the role of theology is not to capture and sediment mystery; instead, theology symbolically interprets and appropriates mystery.

3 –Karl Rahner’s Logic of Symbol

The centrality of mystery and the hermeneutic impulse of Rahner’s foundational thought are integrated in his understanding of the symbol. With symbol, Rahner develops and deepens the traditional problem of the relationship between the one and the many with the logic of unity-in-difference that also permeates his foundational thought and theology.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 359.

¹⁸⁰ Declan Marmion, "Some Aspects of the Theological Legacy of Karl Rahner," in *Karl Rahner: Theologian for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Pádraic Conway; Fáinche Ryan, Studies in Theology, Society and Culture (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 19-20.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

According to Rahner, existence is really symbolic; existence is meaningful and seeks to express its meaning and as such, a symbol is “the representation of which allows the other ‘to be’ there.”¹⁸² The common usage, however, conceives of symbols within arbitrary and superficial relationships of agreement between two or more entities and uses a comparative hermeneutic to establish symbolic relationships. Prescinding from this common understanding of symbol, Rahner contends that real symbols arise out of a primordial relationality of an original unity-in-difference between meaningfulness and expression that is characteristic of Being.

Rahner’s insights regarding symbol are properly ontological and theological. His insights are theological in so far as they are rooted in the Trinity as it is revealed in the Person of Jesus Christ and ontological in so far as Trinity analogously reveals the structure of all reality. Rahner challenges both the certainty of modernity by insisting upon the necessity of mystery and the uncertainty of postmodernity by insisting upon the necessity of human knowing (however limited it may be) through his theological ontology of symbol. The following sections demonstrate that Rahner’s theological and ontological understanding of symbol offers a flexible yet organized hermeneutic for explaining, understanding, and appropriating the structures of finite and infinite being, ecclesiology, human existence, human knowledge, and language.¹⁸³

3.1 – Rahner’s Philosophy of Symbol

¹⁸² Rahner, "The Theology of Symbol," 225.

¹⁸³ Stephen M. Fields, *Being as Symbol: On the Origins and Development of Karl Rahner's Metaphysics* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2000), 21.

Rahner, with Thomas Aquinas, holds that “being means oneness (*ens et unum convertuntur*).”¹⁸⁴ There are, however, two ways that Rahner interprets oneness throughout his writings. Firstly, with respect to an ontic inquiry, “being, as considered in itself... can be one in the oneness of simplicity. In this sense, the capacity to symbolize cannot belong to the structure of being.”¹⁸⁵ Secondly, with respect to an ontological inquiry, being is dynamic because being is to be present-to-self. Hence, being must express itself in order to realize and actualize its own fulfillment. It is Rahner’s ontological focus that provides the resources for postcritical theology.

3.1.1 – Ontology and Symbol

Rahner reframes traditional Western ontology by employing a logic that is governed by symbol. The reality of being is not a static and isolated principle or substance. Instead, being obtains through a complex plurality of origin and expression. Unity-in-difference characterizes existence in such a way that being moves towards expression so as to be realized and known first for itself and subsequently for the other.

Firstly, Rahner asserts with Thomas Aquinas that being is ontologically structured by a movement of emanation and return. Rahner holds that “all beings are by their nature symbolic, because they necessarily ‘express’ themselves in order to attain their own nature.”¹⁸⁶ Being is fundamentally *self*-expressive. Being posits its own other and emanates through its own other in order to express itself and make itself known. There is, however, an ontological affinity that obtains between being and its expression because of a primordial unity that surpasses relationships of agreement or similarity that are

¹⁸⁴ George Vass, *Understanding Karl Rahner*, Vol. 3 (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1996), 107.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Rahner, “The Theology of Symbol,” 224.

characteristic of arbitrary signs. The difference that manifests in the symbolic relationship between being and its expression owes itself to a unity prior to its own expression.

Rahner's notion that being is characteristic of unity-in-difference challenges the traditional hylomorphic conviction of Western ontology, which asserts that form works on matter externally.¹⁸⁷ Using the traditional language of matter and form, Stephen Fields explains that:

[f]orm and matter must be understood as ontologically congenial, because they constitute an original unity as the source of their difference. Because this unity obtains prior to matter's being informed, form and matter constitute a unity-in-difference as the condition for the possibility of any being. This unity-in-difference is abstract because it is yet to be concretely realized as an individually existing substance. This obtains when form structures matter, thus constituting matter as its own other by giving matter meaning and intelligibility.¹⁸⁸

Rahner reinterprets the traditional Western conviction that plurality and difference somehow upset unity. In place of the traditional interpretation of the one over the many, the original unity of the symbol establishes the condition for thinking the one *and* many; original unity provides the condition for the possibility of difference and difference is the condition for the possibility of original unity's expression. As such, difference owes itself to unity and the expression of unity owes itself to difference.

Secondly, Rahner contends that Being's expressive movement into its own other is completed by its return to itself and it is through this return to self that being realizes itself. According to Rahner, "[t]he symbol strictly speaking (symbolic reality) is the self-

¹⁸⁷ Fields, *Being as Symbol*, 7.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

realization of a being in the other, which is constitutive of its essence.”¹⁸⁹ In short, “a symbol is effective because it brings a being to reality” both for itself and for others.¹⁹⁰

The above analysis of being’s dynamic movement of emanation and return demonstrates Rahner’s dissatisfaction with traditional ontological interpretations of existence in Western thought and theology. As Stephen Fields recognizes, the structure of being:

...entails a dynamic, intrinsic, and reciprocal causality. It is dynamic because Being emanates its own other and returns through it. It is intrinsic because Being causes its own unity by causing its own other. It is reciprocal because Being constitutes itself only by returning through its self-caused other.¹⁹¹

Accordingly, beings consist of three aspects: an original unity, an other, and a perfected unity. This means that individual beings ‘become’ what they already are in and through their own ‘other’. Thus, the plurality of being is not simply the mark of an entity’s finitude. George Vass writes:

Finite being by knowing and willing infinitely, tends towards, but never succeeds in overcoming, the ontological difference, whereas the infinite and the absolute *has* overcome this difference. Thus Rahner also differentiates between symbolism and analogy. While a real symbolism belongs to the very structure of being, ‘as the self-realization of a being in the other... analogy is related to the human perception of *the way* a being is symbolic in itself.’¹⁹²

While the structure of all being is symbolic, there is an immeasurable difference between infinite or unrestricted ‘Being’ and finite or restricted ‘beings’.

3.1.2 – *The Symbolic Nature of Human Existence and Knowing*

¹⁸⁹ Rahner, "The Theology of Symbol," 234.

¹⁹⁰ Herbert Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1992), 10.

¹⁹¹ Fields, *Being as Symbol*, 6.

¹⁹² George Vass, *Understanding Karl Rahner. Vol.1* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1985), 108.

The human being, as spirit-in-the-world, exists as the unity-in-difference of both spirit and body. The spirit, which is the human being's capacity for the infinite, realizes itself in and through the body. Thus, the body is the symbol of the spirit. In *The Theology of Symbol*, Rahner formulates the principle that:

... the body is the symbol of the soul (spirit), in as much as it is formed as the self-realization of the soul, though it is not adequately this, and the soul (spirit) renders itself present and makes its 'appearance' in the body which is distinct from it... in this unity of symbol and thing symbolized, constituted as body and soul (spirit), the individual parts of the body are more than mere pieces put together quantitatively to form the whole body; they are rather parts in so special a way that they comprise in themselves the whole, though this is not true in the same strict way of each of the individual parts.¹⁹³

Hence, Rahner envisions human existence as a whole. It is appropriate to speak of the body and spirit as distinct for the sake of conceptual clarity; however, Rahner cautions that within the experience of human being one cannot separate the two from one another. In short, *one* human being exists as a *plurality* of body and spirit. "The person is able to think, to will, imagine, and feel only because the soul is mediated to itself in and through the body."¹⁹⁴

Human knowledge is also symbolic in structure according to Rahner. This is because "the intellect obtains self-consciousness through the immanent object of sensuous intuition, which is its intrinsic sign."¹⁹⁵ As demonstrated above, human knowledge originates in the unity-in-difference of spirit and body and obtains via the synthesis of the transcendental and the categorical. Hence, one must speak of two poles of human knowledge: the transcendental aspect of knowledge that seeks expression and the expression that finds its meaning in transcendence. Put another way, the original

¹⁹³ Rahner, "The Theology of Symbol," 247.

¹⁹⁴ Fields, *Being as Symbol*, 8.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

transcendental knowing of the human being finds its expression in the categorical, but the categorical expression must return to its transcendental origin in order to be fully realized. William Dych writes:

There is the movement of original knowledge gained through actually being in existence towards further and fuller objectification in concepts, towards understanding and judgment, towards expression, language and communication. There is, secondly, the need to relate the concept back to the original experience from which they have been derived and towards which they point. Through this second movement we discover the “real” meaning of words and concepts which we have learned from a common language in which we have been formed and which we have perhaps been using for a long time.¹⁹⁶

Thus, human knowledge is dynamic; there is symbolic relationship between reflection and existence whereby experience is blind without words and concepts and words and concepts have no meaning outside of experience.¹⁹⁷ Rahner writes:

For when it grasps and understands any object, it has already transcended the latter into an infinity that is present as unexplored, precisely as such and not otherwise; it always seizes the individual object by being tacitly aware of the fact that the object always is and remains more than what is grasped of it. It locates the individual object within reference systems which themselves are not precisely fixed and determined and in which such an individual reality has a place without absolutely and forever settled there.¹⁹⁸

Hence, the human being “becomes aware that a spirit-in-the-world knows itself only by mediating itself in the objects of sensation.”¹⁹⁹

Reflection upon experience reveals the symbolic nature of human knowledge, which owes itself to human capacity for what Rahner, calls, with Thomas Aquinas, *excessus*. “Reason must be understood... as the capacity of *excessus*, as going out into

¹⁹⁶ William V. Dych, “Method in Theology,” in *Theology and Discovery: Essays in Honor of Karl Rahner, S.J.*, ed. Willam J. Kelly (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1980), 41.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Karl Rahner, “The Human Question of Meaning in the Face of the Absolute Mystery of God,” in *God and Revelation*, Theological Investigations (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 97-98.

¹⁹⁹ Fields, *Being as Symbol*, 13.

the inaccessible.²⁰⁰ The human being via reason is capable of recognizing the “more” of the experience. In a first instance, the human being recognizes the “more” of experience when one recognizes the universal in a particular. Put crudely, the human being has the ability, for instance, to recognize a particular tree (sensible singular) as a tree (universal) without knowing every particular tree. Hence, each sensible singular instance of a tree that is immediately experienced must mediate universal *treeness*. This capacity, according to Rahner, is possible of a second *excessus* that is ontologically prior to the first. The second *excessus* is possible because of the *Vorgriff*. Simply put, the human being recognizes that each instance of *a* universal is not *the* universal. This is significant because the ontological difference, according to Rahner, is at least implicitly affirmed and mediated in every act of human knowing.²⁰¹

All human knowing is possible because of the ability to interpret and appropriate the *excessus* of experience. In short, the human being possesses tacit knowledge that is both ontological (as evidenced by the capacity to appropriate universals) and theological (as is evidenced by the supernatural existential) and comes to expression in and through the world. For instance, the reality of loving and being loved exceeds its concrete expression and subsequent articulation in language and concepts, but in order to know that one is loving or being loved requires appropriate expression. A kiss, an embrace, and words of endearment are all concrete expressions that really manifest (make present) the more original experience of loving and being loved. One cannot know they are

²⁰⁰ Rahner, "The Human Question of Meaning in the Face of the Absolute Mystery of God," 97.

²⁰¹ See: Fields, *Being as Symbol*, 9-13.

loving or being loved without such expressions; however, these expressions do not exhaust the original experience.²⁰²

3.2 – Rahner's Theology of Symbol

Trinitarian theology is the source of Rahner's observations regarding the symbol and its unity-in-difference. As reality's prime analogue, the infinite mode of being is the Trinity. The Trinity reveals the symbolic structure of being as perfect unity-in-difference.²⁰³ Because of Western Christianity's preference for perfect unity and the absolute equality of the divine Persons of the Trinity, Rahner believes that it minimizes the "sense of uniqueness of each of the divine Person's activity in salvation history."²⁰⁴ Doctrinally speaking, upholding the 'real' difference of the Persons of the Trinity as well as the diversity of activities attributed to each Person is necessary.²⁰⁵ The recognition that Western Christianity neglects to reflect upon the real difference that is characteristic of the Trinity in Revelation leads Rahner to assert, "[t]he 'economic' Trinity is the 'immanent' Trinity and the 'immanent' Trinity is the 'economic' Trinity."²⁰⁶

3.2.1 – Symbol, Trinity, and Incarnation

The immanent Trinity and its economic expression cannot be understood as separate realities. Separating the reality of the Trinity *ad intra* from its expression *ad*

²⁰² Here Rahner echoes Ricoeur's contention that symbolic meaning is mediated via the literal and immediate meaning of an object. See chapter one pp. 45-49

²⁰³ The ontological difference still holds in Rahner's conception of the ontology of the symbol. Rahner's observations regarding the Trinity are rooted in Revelation not human insight. Hence, the use of analogy protects and affirms the difference between Being and beings, creator and creature, or God and humanity.

²⁰⁴ Karl Rahner and Catherine Mowry Lacugna, *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel (New York: Crossroad Pub., 1997), xi.

²⁰⁵ Explain the traditional distinctions between the Persons of the Trinity.

²⁰⁶ Rahner and Mowry Lacugna, *The Trinity*, 21-23. Rahner maintains that practically speaking Western Christians, especially in light of Augustine, are monists. "It is as though this mystery has been revealed for its own sake, and that even after it has been made known to us, it remains, *as a reality*, locked up within itself. We make statements about it, but as a reality it has nothing to with us at all." Ibid., 14.

extra in salvation history leads to a monist understanding of God with respect to God's expression whereby particular instances of God's activity in the world can be arbitrarily assigned to any Person of the Trinity. Put another way, the neglect of the intrinsic connection between the distinct Persons of the Trinity and the expression proper to each fosters an understanding that, at least in theory, any Person of the Trinity could have become incarnate, redeem, sanctify, etc. Instead, Rahner contends that the Persons of the Trinity and their immanent relations evidence the symbolic structure of perfected unity-in-difference in such a way that the perfect unity-in-difference of the internal relations of the Trinity are really expressed outwardly in the economy of salvation.

Rahner explains that the immanent relationship between the Father and the Son is one of origin and expression. He writes:

One, the Word – as reality of the immanent divine life – is 'generated' by the Father and the *image* and *expression* of the Father. Two, this process is necessarily given with the divine act of self-knowledge, and without it the absolute act of divine self-possession in knowledge cannot exist... The Father is himself by the very act that he opposes to himself the image which is of the same essence as himself, as person who is other than himself, and so he possesses himself. But this means that the Logos is the 'symbol' of the Father... the inward symbol which remains distinct from what is symbolized, where what is symbolized expresses itself and possesses itself.²⁰⁷

It is precisely because of the immanent relationship *ad intra* between the Father and the Logos, as one of origin and expression, that God can utter himself *ad extra* in and

²⁰⁷ Rahner, "The Theology of Symbol," 236. An important distinction emerges between unrestricted infinite Being and restricted finite beings. In the case of Trinity, essence and existence are identical.²⁰⁷ In short, the Trinity's simplicity manifests its multiplicity and its multiplicity manifests its simplicity. However, this is not the case for finite beings because finite beings are not absolutely simple; finite entities do not enjoy a perfect identity between essence and existence, between meaning and expression as is the situation with the Trinity.

through the Logos.²⁰⁸ The humanity of Jesus also demonstrates a symbolic structure.

Rahner writes:

The humanity is the self-disclosure of the Logos itself, so that when God, expressing himself, exteriorizes himself, that very thing that appears which we call the humanity of the Logos. Anthropology itself is finally based on something more than the doctrine of the possibilities open to an infinite creator – who would not however really betray *himself* when he created. Its ultimate source is the doctrine about God himself, in so far as it depicts that which ‘appears’ when in his self-exteriorization he goes out of himself into that which is other than he.²⁰⁹

Put simply, in the incarnation the humanity of Jesus is the symbol, the visible expression of the divine Logos in the world and in history.²¹⁰ Noticeably absent in Rahner’s account of the Trinity is the Holy Spirit. It should be noted that Rahner’s neglect of the Holy Spirit is most likely because of his focus on reframing Christology within the context of the symbol. However, as Stephen Fields observes, it is appropriate to discuss the Holy Spirit within in the context of the emanation and returning to self of Being. “Rahner does not explicitly locate the Holy Spirit within this scheme, the drift of his thought suggests that this Person is constituted by the return of the Father through the Son.”²¹¹

3.2.2 – *Symbol and Church*

Rahner begins a lengthy discussion on the nature of the symbolic and sacramental nature of the Church by asserting that, “[t]he Church is not merely a religious institution... But neither was it simply founded from above by Christ as a spiritual

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 239.

²¹⁰ As a consequence of the Christ event, Rahner writes, “The grace of God no longer comes (when it does come) steeply down from on high, from a God absolutely transcending the world, and in a manner that is without history, purely episodic; it is permanently in the world in tangible historical form, established in the flesh of Christ as part of the world, of humanity and of its very history.” Karl Rahner, “The Church and the Sacraments,” in *Inquiries* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1964), 197.

²¹¹ Fields, *Being as Symbol*.

welfare establishment.”²¹² If the salvific presence of God’s grace is to be really present in the world through the human being, it must arise in what is other than God. In short, it must come to the human being in and through symbol.²¹³ Thus, Rahner’s understanding of symbol has significant ramifications for ecclesiology. Rahner maintains that the

... Church is the continuance, the contemporary presence, of that real, eschatologically triumphant and irrevocably established presence in the world, in Christ, of God’s salvific will. The Church is the abiding presence of that primal sacramental word of definitive grace, which Christ is in the world, effecting what is uttered by uttering it in sign.²¹⁴

The Church continues the symbolic function of the Logos. Hence, the Church is the symbol of Jesus Christ; the church, while differentiated from Jesus Christ, nevertheless presents Jesus Christ.

Rahner notes that there are two important points that must be considered in light of this observation. Firstly, because the Church, as a symbol, continues the symbolic activity of Jesus Christ, it is necessarily social. The Church is real people of God and as such is the historical community that in particular socio-cultural circumstance continues to express the message of salvation that originates in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Secondly, the Church is not only a social reality, but it is also a salvific reality. The Church does not express a reality that is foreign to its expression. According to

²¹² Rahner, "The Church and the Sacraments," 193.

²¹³ Rahner contends that one must uphold “The principle that God’s salvific action on man, from its first foundations to its completion, always takes place in such a way that God himself is the reality of salvation, because it is given to man and grasped by him in the symbol, which does not represent an absent and merely promised reality but exhibits this reality as something present, by means of the symbol formed by it.” Rahner, "The Theology of Symbol," 245.

²¹⁴ Rahner, "The Church and the Sacraments," 200.

Rahner, “The grace of salvation, the Holy Spirit himself, is of its essence. But this is to affirm that this symbol of the grace of God really contains what it signifies...”²¹⁵

Thus as symbol the Church, in freedom and responsibility, remains faithful to its mission given to it by Jesus Christ when it *presents* the message of salvation in a really human manner. In other words, as the visible, tangible symbol of God’s grace, the Church must actualize itself as such.²¹⁶

3.2.3 – *Symbol, Sacrament, and Word*

Rahner holds that the Church symbolically actualizes itself in both word and sacrament.²¹⁷ Rahner explicates the relationship between sacrament and word in his essay *Word and Eucharist* and in so doing further clarifies his theology of symbol and its hermeneutic significance. Rahner develops six theses that demonstrate the relationship between word and sacrament. Firstly, Rahner states that, “[t]he word of God is uttered by the Church, where it is preserved inviolate in its entirety, and necessarily so, in its character as the word of God.” The Church and the word, while distinct, are united with one another in such a way that wherever the word is preached the Church is present and wherever the Church is the word is present. George Vass observes that,

Rahner does not start by distinguishing between word and sign; he rather asserts the signifying character of the word along with the verbal character of the sign. Both sign and word are symbolic realities in the preaching of the Church. This

²¹⁵ Rahner, "The Theology of Symbol," 241.

²¹⁶ See: Roger D. Haight, "Historical Ecclesiology : An Essay on Method in the Study of the Church," *Science et Esprit* 39, no. 3 (1987). And Roger D. Haight, "Historical Ecclesiology : An Essay on Method in the Study of the Church," *Science et Esprit* 39, no. 1 (1987).

²¹⁷ In this context Rahner understands “word” to mean “the word of God, as it appears in the preaching of the Church” and “sacrament” as “basic acts of the self-realization of the Church with regards to individuals at decisive situations in their lives.” Rahner, "Word and Eucharist," 253; 277.

sign is the visible gesture of the Church and the word uttered conveys the authority of God's word.²¹⁸

The Church cannot exist without the word of God and the word of God is a reality in so far as the Church preaches it.

Secondly, "[t]his word of God in the Church is an inner moment of God's salvific action on man." According to Rahner, there is an intrinsic relationship between the inner word of God's grace and the event of God's word spoken externally to the human being. The inner word is illuminated by the proclamation of the God's word. Rahner writes:

... the proclamation of the word of God, that is, the word in so far as it is conveyed by the *historical*, external salvific act of God as an intrinsic moment of this act and by the community of believers, belongs necessarily to the inner moments of God's *action* on man.²¹⁹

Thirdly, "[a]s an inner moment in this salvific action of God, the word shares in the special character of the salvific action of God in Christ (and in the Church)." Here Rahner affirms that the transcendental experience of the human being, as an inner moment of God's grace, must find expression in human terms. In other words, the gift of justifying grace that is extended to all of humanity and forms the supernatural existential of the human being, must have a categorical expression. "Should this kind of expression be lacking salvation would be just some 'secret depth' within the soul."²²⁰

Fourthly, [t]his word of God... is the salutary word which brings with it what it affirms." Here is where the full weight of Rahner's understanding of symbol is brought to bear on the discussion. The expression and what is being expressed are united in their difference. The word of God really brings about the salvation that it proclaims.

²¹⁸ George Vass, *The Sacrament of the Future : An Evaluation of Karl Rahner's Concept of the Sacraments and the End of Time* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2005), 20.

²¹⁹ Rahner, "Word and Eucharist," 259.

²²⁰ Vass, *The Sacrament of the Future : An Evaluation of Karl Rahner's Concept of the Sacraments and the End of Time*, 17.

Fifthly, [t]his word... takes place in the Church in essentially varying degrees of concentration and intensity.” Here Rahner makes an important observation that should not be overlooked nor minimized; he recognizes that not all symbols are equal. The efficacy of the symbol is in some sense determined both by its proclamation and by its reception. Rahner writes that word of God that is proclaimed by the Church “can realize its essence only in a historical process, it is not always and at every moment fully its whole self: it grows, it *becomes* what it is and must be, it can be deficient, provisional and preparatory phases and moments.”²²¹

Lastly, [t]he supreme realization of the efficacious word of God, as the coming of the salvific action of God in the radical commitment of the Church... in the situations decisive for the individual’s salvation, is the sacrament and only the sacrament.”

Sacraments are most properly understood as symbols or events of God’s self-communication in the world of which the Church is fundamentally related. Rahner writes:

By such "natural symbols" or intrinsically real symbols, we mean for our purpose here, the spatio-temporal, historical phenomenon, the visible and tangible form in which something that appears, notifies its presence, and by so doing, makes itself present, bodying forth this manifestation really distinct from itself. With natural symbols, the sign or symbol as a phenomenon is intrinsically linked to what it is a phenomenon of, and which is present and operative, even though really distinct. In fact we must distinguish between two aspects: the dependence of the actual manifestation on what is manifesting itself, and the difference between the two.²²²

Whenever and wherever the Church actualizes its essence it does so as the real symbol of Christ’s redemptive grace.²²³

²²¹ Rahner, "Word and Eucharist," 264.

²²² Rahner, "The Church and the Sacraments," 219-220.

²²³ Rahner distinguishes various levels of the Church’s activity. While all instances of the Church’s self-actualization are properly “sacramental” in structure, Rahner contends that the seven Sacraments of the Catholic Church and in particular the Eucharist definitively actualize the

3.3 – Symbol, Language, and Doctrine

Rahner's understanding of language is closely related to symbol and in particular the symbolic significance of the Logos. His analysis and subsequent conclusions regarding language reveal Rahner's anticipation of postmodernity and the implicit influence of Martin Heidegger's philosophy on his thought.²²⁴

Rahner envisions language not as an instrument that simply conveys thought, but as "embodied thought."²²⁵ As incarnate thought, language is more original than thought; it gives rise to thought.²²⁶ However, not all words are equivalent. Rahner distinguishes between "primordial words" and "conventional words" when he writes:

There are words which divide and words that unite: words which can be artificially manufactured and arbitrarily determined and words which have always existed or are newly born as a miracle; words which unravel the whole in order to explain the part, and words which by a kind of enchantment produce in the person who listens to them what they are expressing; words which illuminate something small, picking out with their light only part of reality, and words which make us wise allowing the manifold to harmonize in unity. There are words which delimit and isolate, but there are also words which render a single thing translucent to the infinity of all reality... They bring light to *us*, not we to them. They have power over us because they are gifts from God, not creations of men, even though they perhaps they came to us through men. Some words are clear because they are shallow and without mystery; they suffice for the mind; by means of them one

Church's essence as the abiding presence of Christ in a particular time and place for the individual.

²²⁴ See: Craig A. Baron, "The Poetry of Transcendental Thomism: Postmodernity Anticipated and Challenged in Karl Rahner," in *The Presence of Transcendence : Thinking 'Sacrament' in a Postmodern Age*, ed. L. Boeve and John Ries (Leuven: Peeters, 2001). It should be noted that while Rahner's theology is often discussed in relationship to philosophy of Martin Heidegger, the transcendental philosophy of Joseph Maréchal was undoubtedly a considerable influence for Rahner as well.

²²⁵ Karl Rahner, "Priest and Poet," in *The Theology of the Spiritual Life*, Theological Investigations (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1967), 295.

²²⁶ Rahner's description of language shows a remarkable affinity to Paul Ricoeur's notion of the symbol as "giving rise to thought." Rahner writes, "...the word... is the corporal state in which what we now experience and think first begins to exist by fashioning itself to the word-body. To be more precise: the word is embodied thought, not the embodiment of the thought. It is more than the thought and more original than the thought, just as the entire man is more than, and more original than, his body and soul considered separately." Ibid.

acquires mastery over things. Other words are perhaps obscure because they evoke the binding mystery of things.²²⁷

Robert Masson correctly observes that Rahner's concept of primordial words is not so much about a *kind* of word as it is about the *way* a word is used.²²⁸ Hence, primordial words elude definition. Rahner contends that primordial words "can only be taken apart by being killed."²²⁹ In short, primordial words do not conform to strict conceptual or categorical definitions. Primordial words present and speak of the opaque and dynamic aspects of existence and reality. Hence, as symbols primordial words both reveal and conceal.

3.3.1 – *The Symbol and Doctrinal Language*

The theology of symbol, according to Rahner, provides the hermeneutic necessary for approaching theological and dogmatic statements. Rahner writes:

The principle that the concept of symbol... is an essential key-concept in all theological treatises, without which it is impossible to have a correct understanding of the subject-matter of the various treatises in themselves and in relation to other treatises.²³⁰

Theological and doctrinal statements carry both transcendental and categorical meaning. Put another way, theological and doctrinal statements are human words and finite concepts that point to the infinitely mysterious reality of God. Hence, such statements

²²⁷ Ibid., 295-296.

²²⁸ Robert Masson, "Rahner's Primordial Words and Bernstein's Metaphorical Leaps: The Affinity of Art with Religion and Theology," *Horizons* 33, no. 2 (2006): 279. Masson also describes ten helpful characteristics that distinguish primordial words from conventional words. Primordial words: 1) have an original relation to the realities about which they speak, 2) point beyond themselves into the infinity of reality, 3) cannot be unequivocally defined, 4) are not arbitrarily constructed, 5) are not conventional signs, 6) are irreplaceable, 7) present the reality they signify, 8) open up aspects of reality for the hearer, 9) open up the hearer to aspects of reality, and 10) are sacramental in structure. Ibid., 280.

²²⁹ Rahner, "Priest and Poet," 297. Here Rahner echoes Gabriel Marcel's distinction between a problem and a mystery.

²³⁰ Rahner, "The Theology of Symbol," 245.

can never unravel God's absolute and transcendent mystery. All theological and dogmatic statements are open to further development. The development of theological and doctrinal statements need not imply that such statements lack truth or are relative. Instead, the principle of doctrinal development affirms the abiding mystery of God.

According to Rahner there are five constitutive elements of the dynamism of doctrinal development. Firstly, as discussed above, Revelation as God's self-disclosure requires that the addressee of Revelation be capable of hearing a possible word from God. Put another way, "A divine utterance which is divine by its own nature has no meaning unless it is directed towards a divine hearing."²³¹ Secondly, the word of God is officially delivered by the Church's magisterium that "essentially has the function of preserving and distinguishing."²³² The magisterium, however, "promotes the development of dogma when the movement has already been launched by other factors." Dogmatic and doctrinal pronouncements and developments are initiated by factors other than the magisterium of the Church such as history, culture, and theology. Hence, development occurs as the result of dialogue between the magisterium and other elements that are proper to the Church and its nature. Thirdly, God's revelation of God's-self is carried and passed along in human words and concepts. Rahner writes:

All this, however, cannot hide the fact that this word itself is purely a genuine human word and is only competent to make God's word present to us, as long as the human word remains such, with all the elements and consequences of coming from the human mind.²³³

Language and concepts are necessarily marked by the limits of particular sociocultural spatiotemporal situations. Hence, as language and concepts develop, so too must

²³¹ Karl Rahner, "Considerations on the Development of Dogma," in *More Recent Writings*, Theological Investigations (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1966), 12.

²³² *Ibid.*, 16.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 18.

dogmatic and doctrinal statements. Fourthly, statements of dogma and doctrine are forever in the process of being handed on by the Tradition of the Church, are subject to the Tradition of the Church, and constitute the Tradition of the Church. Dogma and doctrine are truths which truths, which are spoken to someone. Hence,

traditio [handing on] takes place at a given moment of space and time, is necessarily historical, and absorbs the recipient and his historical uniqueness, which is also properly of his knowledge, into the process of *traditio* itself.²³⁴

In other words, Rahner recognizes that the processes of speaking and hearing are both marked by the world in which one lives. Therefore the process of *traditio* is also a dynamic and hermeneutic process where the activities of explaining, understanding, and appropriating are in constant development or movement.²³⁵ Lastly, “[w]here dogma is present to the full extent of its being, it implies that conscious faith of the Church... holds it *as* revealed by God.”²³⁶ Hence, it is possible for the Church to become aware of truth of which it was not previously conscious.

Rahner’s understandings of language and doctrinal development demonstrate the significance of a logic that is governed by symbol for theological discourse. The development of doctrine is the fruit of the relationship between expression and what is expressed that is dynamic, reciprocal, and intrinsic.

4 – Conclusion

Rahner’s theological method and his understanding of symbol provide valuable resources for a theology that is postcritical. Rahner’s theological method challenges the

²³⁴ Ibid., 25.

²³⁵ Interestingly, Rahner sees this process developing in one of two ways. In the first instance, doctrinal development will progress towards multiplication and distinction. In the second instance, doctrinal development will progress towards convergence upon the one mystery of God.

²³⁶ Rahner, "Considerations on the Development of Dogma," 27.

critical attitudes of modernity and postmodernity by affirming the experience of mystery within the concrete circumstances of the human being. Far from dismissing the ontological and metaphysical tradition of the West, Rahner's theology of symbol capitalizes on the strengths of ontology and metaphysics while opening up the space for other phenomenological experience of the human being. The dynamism of the symbol, which according to Rahner is characterized by the process of emanation and return, supports both constancy and change. The relationship between the symbol and symbolized is one of expression and origin respectively. However, the dynamism of the symbol suggests that the origin which comes to expression on and through the symbol is also realized for the other and for itself in and through the symbol. Thus, all finite beings are in the process of becoming what they are both one's-self and for the other. All aspects of human existence are meaningful and related in diversity not in spite of it. In turn, Rahner's theological method provides resources for reframing traditional Western approaches to the relationship between unity and difference that are indicative of a logic of the one over the many.

Rahner's observations regarding the symbolic nature of reality provide new possibilities for theological discourse whereby the realities of unity and difference are understood in a productive relationship with one another. In sum, Rahner's theology and method seeks to explain and understand unity-in-difference and accomplishes this task most effectively with symbol.

CHAPTER THREE

KARL RAHNER AND ECUMENICAL THEOLOGY IN THE THIRD MILLENNIUM:

A SYMBOLIC RETHINKING OF UNITY AND DIFFERENCE

1. – Introduction

The fundamental task of this chapter is to broaden the concept of unity by developing an understanding of mutual recognition for the ecumenical movement that is governed by a logic of symbol.²³⁷ Such a rethinking within the ecumenical movement must not only ask about what one sees in the other, but also re-evaluate how one sees the other in the first place.

The ecumenical movement and ecumenical dialogue are in need of a “second naïveté”.²³⁸ The need for a second naïveté is clear when one recognizes that at its foundation ecumenical dialogue is a dialogue of symbols. This chapter suggests that ecumenical dialogue is always at least implicitly an ecclesiological dialogue that strives for mutual recognition (not necessarily consensus or agreement) on all matters. Hence, it is necessary to distinguish between the nature and purpose of the church, ecumenism, and ecumenical dialogue.

The intention of this chapter is twofold. Firstly, this chapter establishes the need for ecumenical dialogue to move beyond both the traditional Western logic of the one over the many and the logic of postmodernity that accords primacy to difference over

²³⁷ Yves Congar provides a poignant example of the need to broaden the concept of unity within Catholicism. Quoting an unnamed protestant observer at the 1978 meeting of French Bishops in Lourdes, Congar writes, “Since Vatican II, your church has put into practice everything possible in the perspective of unity which she has allowed herself. It seems that at present she cannot go any further. Might that not be a sign that your conception of unity is not broad enough, and that in particular it cannot recognize difference?” Yves Congar, *Diversity and Communion*, North American ed. (Mystic, Conn.: Twenty-Third Publications, 1985), 2.

²³⁸ See: chapter one pp.44-52

unity. While recognizing a certain indebtedness to both modernity and postmodernity, this chapter elucidates the need to develop an approach to ecumenical dialogue that is postcritical and governed by a logic of symbol. Secondly, this chapter develops the theological insights of Karl Rahner in order to advance a theology of ecumenical dialogue that 1) originates in the mystery of the unity of the church of Christ, 2) humbly recognizes the complex nature of Christ's church and its unfolding surplus of meaning, and 3) in courage and faith can pursue the unfolding unity of the church of Christ in history while also recognizing that its aim is an eschatological reality.

2. – The Ecumenical Movement and Ecumenical Dialogue in the Third Millennium

The contemporary ecumenical movement and its efforts towards the realization of the *koinonia* of Christ's church left an indelible mark on Christianity in the twentieth century. During the twentieth century, the ecumenical conviction emerged that the churches separated and spread throughout the world in a variety of particular theological, historical, sociological, and geographical contexts must learn to express together the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church of Christ in and through the common activities of *martyria* (witness), *leitourgia* (worship), and *diakonia* (service). However, the exuberance and excitement that accompanied the initial discoveries of commonality and sharing between separated Christian churches in the early and middle of the twentieth century have given way to the sobering realization that there are still a great many differences that continue to divide the one church of Christ.

Today the ecumenical landscape in Western Christianity is fraught with questions and concerns regarding the roles of difference and diversity for the unity sought by the ecumenical movement. Avery Dulles writes:

It should not be surprising... that in the contemporary Church, rocked by paradigm shifts, we should find phenomena such as polarization, mutual incomprehension, inability to communicate, frustration, and discouragement. Since the situation is simply a fact of our times, we must learn to live with it. It will greatly help, however, if people can learn to practice tolerance and to accept pluralism. We must recognize that our own favorite paradigms, however excellent, do not solve all questions. Much harm is done by imperialistically seeking to impose some one model as the definitive one.²³⁹

As the Christian churches that are engaged in ecumenical activity traverse a new era marked by pluralism and globalization and begin to recognize that Christianity's living space is the whole world,²⁴⁰ the interpretation and appropriation of Christian identity and the realities of unity and difference are in need of hermeneutical resources that are capable of constructively engaging the present-day ecumenical context.

This section argues that the tensions experienced by the contemporary ecumenical movement in the West issue from divergent understandings and explanations of the roles of unity and difference within the *koinonia* of Christ's church. While it is generally accepted that unity and difference are intrinsic characteristics of Christ's church, individual churches tend to emphasize either unity or difference in a variety of ways. The tendencies to emphasize either unity or difference shapes how particular churches interpret: 1) Christian identity in relation to orthodoxy and orthopraxis and 2) the identity of the church in relation to its universal and particular dimensions. Drawing upon Paul Ricouer's work, *The Course of Recognition*, this section articulates a postcritical framework for ecumenical dialogue that is capable of moving beyond the hermeneutical impasses of the present-day ecumenical movement in the West.

2.1 – The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenism: Recollecting the Church

²³⁹ Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, Expanded ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 23.

²⁴⁰ See: chapter one pp. 11

Ecumenism, in its contemporary form, emerges out of the present-day division of the church in relation to the conviction that such disunity offends Christ's prayer that those who believe in him "may all be one."²⁴¹ John Paul II explains:

To believe in Christ means to desire unity; to desire unity means to desire the Church; to desire the Church means to desire the communion of grace which corresponds to the Father's plan from all eternity. Such is the meaning of Christ's prayer: "*Ut unum sint*."²⁴²

The nature and purpose of ecumenism are properly understood within the purview of the nature and purpose of the church itself. The Canberra Statement (1991), *The Unity of the Church as Koinonia: Gift and Calling*, succinctly articulates the nature and purpose of ecumenism:

The unity of the Church to which we are called is *koinonia* given and expressed in the common confession of the apostolic faith; common sacramental life entered by one baptism and celebrated together in one Eucharistic fellowship; a common life in which the members and ministries are mutually recognized and reconciled; and a common mission witnessing to the gospel of God's grace to all people and serving the whole of creation. The goal of the search for full communion is realized when all the churches are able to recognize in one another the one, holy, catholic apostolic church in its fullness.²⁴³

As extensions of the nature and purpose of the church, the primary concerns of ecumenism are directed towards interpreting and appropriating the relationship between

²⁴¹ John 17:21 NAB; The 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh is often considered to be the formal beginning of the contemporary ecumenical movement. However, it would be inaccurate to hold that ecumenical activities were dormant until 1910. Rahner writes, "Every living reality has a history, and often too a pre-history, and for the most part it is not possible to draw any unambiguous boundaries between history and pre-history, especially since in the case we are considering the mentality of the individual theologians, even in earlier ages, was not the same, but rather exhibits profound differences, so that perhaps in any distinction we might draw between controversial theology and ecumenical theology it might be said that from the Reformation to the present day there have been ecumenical theologians and controversial theologians." Karl Rahner, "On the Theology of Ecumenical Discussion," in *Confrontations I*, Theological Investigations (New York: Seabury, 1974), 25-26.

²⁴² John Paul II, "Ut Unum Sint," *Origins* 25, no. 4 (1995): ¶9.

²⁴³ World Council of Churches, "The Unity of the Church as Koinonia: Gift and Calling," in *The Ecumenical Movement : An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices*, ed. Michael Cope Brian E. Kinnamon (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997), 124.

unity and diversity. Ecumenism, however, is a distinctive reality in so far as it is concerned with the abnormal situation of a divided church.²⁴⁴

The *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* articulates the conviction that ecumenism is intimately bound to one's understanding of the church, but warns against misappropriating the significance of both unity and diversity:

...the ecumenical movement has been a search for unity in the truth as it is found in Jesus (Eph. 4:21) and into which the Holy Spirit leads (John 16:13). It has not been a matter, on the one hand, of creating a super-orthodoxy uniformly formulated or, on the other, of doctrinal compromise or indifferentism. Rather, churches have together searched the scriptures, the venerable Tradition of the church, and the belief and practice of the contemporary communities with the aim of reaching a "common expression of the apostolic faith today" ...²⁴⁵

As the above testifies, the ecumenical search for unity is a shared process, though separated Christian churches carry out that process. The truth sought by the ecumenical movement is neither an instance of a super-orthodoxy that envisions unity by way of a logic of the one over the many, nor is truth arrived at through an uncritical acceptance of difference and diversity. Instead, "ecumenical Christians" writes Kinnamon, "should be so committed to living the whole truth of the Christian faith that they readily confess that this truth is greater than any of their separated witnesses."²⁴⁶

Ecumenism looks to discover the unity of the church in the truth of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. It is also a movement concerning unity-in-difference that unfolds through a dialogic process and seeks to uncover the truth that is found within the

²⁴⁴ The phrase "unity and acceptable diversity" is used commonly within ecumenical language. It is essential that "acceptable diversity" is not understood and explained from a purely ontological/metaphysical perspective. When it is interpreted in this manner, "acceptable diversity" turns out to be difference that can be managed; otherness that can be dissolved or reconciled to the same.

²⁴⁵ Nicolas Lossky, *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, 2nd ed. (Geneva, Switzerland: WCC Publications, 2002), xvi.

²⁴⁶ Michael Kinnamon, *The Vision of the Ecumenical Movement and How It Has Been Impoverished by Its Friends* (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2003), 63-64.

shared diversity of the church. The *Decree on Ecumenism* of Vatican II testifies to this conviction when it states, “[w]hatever is truly Christian is never contrary to what genuinely belongs to the faith; indeed, it can always bring a deeper realization of the mystery of Christ and the church.”²⁴⁷

The intention of following sections is to articulate the nature and purpose of the ecumenical movement and ecumenical dialogue. The interpretation of ecumenism that emerges in this section is one that is open to possible ways of expressing unity that are largely ignored or undeveloped within the contemporary ecumenical movement.

2.1.1 – The Nature of the Ecumenism

The ecumenical movement is deeply wed to how various churches interpret and appropriate the nature of the church. In particular, ecumenism is concerned with the unity of the church or *koinonia*. Hence, it is not surprising that one of the basic challenges confronting ecumenism is competition between various ecclesiological convictions regarding the communion of the church. Kurt Koch writes:

Since each church has and realizes its denominationally specific concept of the unity of its own church, and is therefore virtually automatically intent on transferring this denominational concept to the goal of the ecumenical movement too, there are as many differing representations of the goal of ecumenism as there are different churches.²⁴⁸

Koch’s analysis astutely acknowledges that the difficulties ecumenism faces issue from a kind of ecclesiological provincialism. The *Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches* writes:

²⁴⁷ Second Vatican Council, "Decree on Ecumenism," in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. Norman P. Tanner (London: Sheed & Ward, 1990), 912.

²⁴⁸ Kurt Koch, "Ecumenical Developments and New Challenges: Where Do We Stand Forty Years after Unitatis Redintegratio?," in *Searching for Christian Unity*, ed. J. Paul, W. Kasper, and J. Zizioulas (New York: New City, 2007), 96.

The *koinonia* or communion as the basic understanding of the church demands attempting to develop common ecumenical perspectives on ecclesiology. Unity is not uniformity but a communion of rich diversity. Therefore, it is necessary to explore with others the limits of legitimate diversity. In this regard special cognizance must also be taken of the religious and socio-cultural context in which the process of ecumenical formation takes place.²⁴⁹

The fundamental challenge that confronts the ecumenical movement is not the diversity of ecclesiologies put forth by particular churches, it is the inability or the refusal of particular churches to see beyond their own horizon of understanding. In either case, a logic of the one over the many, often expressed in some form of metaphysical ontology, leads to an exclusivist position towards other churches. Such positions hold to the conviction that a reliable interpretation adheres to the principle of non-contradiction and are, in the end, antithetical to the nature of ecumenism in so far as they seek to reconcile diversity by subsuming otherness to sameness. In short, unity does not mean uniformity.²⁵⁰

In sum, by its nature, ecumenism is a dialogic and interpretive movement concerned with fostering the unity of the church. It takes as its starting point the conviction that all Christians are already united by the same justifying grace of God despite the very real divisions that exist between churches.

2.1.2 - *The Purpose of Ecumenism*

The goal or purpose of ecumenism is the realization of the *koinonia* of Christ's church in and through the shared activities of *leitourgia*, *martyria*, and *diakonia*.

Recognizing that an openly divided church violates the church's identity as one, holy,

²⁴⁹ The Ecumenical Movement Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC and 1993, "Ecumenical Formation," in *The Ecumenical Movement : An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices*, ed. Michael Cope Brian E. Kinnamon (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997), 452.

²⁵⁰ Karl Rahner, "Ecumenical Togetherness Today," in *Humane Society and the Church of Tomorrow*, ed. Paul Imhof, Theological Investigations (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 89.

catholic, and apostolic and denigrates the church's expressive activities of *leitourgia*, *martyria*, and *diakonia*, ecumenism calls separated churches to conversion and promotes healing reconciliation between them. Jeffrey Gros acknowledges:

The Church has no meaning, no purpose, separate from its place in relationship to God's love for us. In ecumenical conversion we are called to love one another with something of the love that has been shown to us in creation, redemption, and the sustaining and sanctification of the Spirit. We are called to be imaginative and resourceful in our loving. The process of ecumenical life is a context in which we need to learn how to recognize, value, and appropriate elements from other Christian groups that are gifts of the Spirit intended for all.²⁵¹

Philip Potter contends that the ecumenical movement is "the means by which the churches form the house, the *oikos* of God, are seeking so to live and witness before all peoples that the whole *oikoumene* may become the *oikos* of God through the crucified and risen Christ in the power of the life-giving Spirit."²⁵² Ecumenism seeks the *koinonia* of the church by fostering mutual recognition in and through dialogue. Rahner and Fries write:

The purpose of ecumenical conversation is not that two churches should confront each other with their separate traditions and attempt by bargaining and compromise to reduce the two to one. It is rather that together they should be able to achieve a more authentic reformation than either of them could achieve in isolation.²⁵³

Thus, the ecumenical movement looks to establish the unity of the church via mutual recognition that obtains in and through dialogue. Mutual recognition, however, is not the goal and purpose of ecumenism. While the *koinonia* of the church requires mutual recognition, mutual recognition does not automatically lead to unity. A divided church

²⁵¹ Jeffrey Gros, Eamon McManus, and Ann Riggs, *Introduction to Ecumenism* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 110.

²⁵² Philip Potter, "Report of the General Secretary: Sixth Assembly of the Wcc, Vancouver, 1983," in *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices*, ed. Michael Cope Brian E. Kinnamon (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997), 55.

²⁵³ Harold Ditmanson, "A Response to the Fries-Rahner Proposal for Church Unity," *Lutheran quarterly*, no. 1 (1987): 375.

is a divided symbol and, as such, it suffers from a diminished efficacy; a divided church poorly “recollects” Jesus Christ. The most fundamental purpose of ecumenism is to “recollect” a divided church so that it may “recollect” Jesus Christ. Hence, in order for the ecumenical movement to achieve its goal particular churches must recognize and experience one another and themselves as *real* but *incomplete* symbols of Jesus Christ. Hence, no particular church can confess to be the complete symbol of Jesus Christ in so far as such a claim is an eschatological one.

2.2 – Ecumenical Dialogue: Mutual Recognition and a Dialogue of Symbols

Ecumenical dialogue, from a postcritical perspective, seeks to foster and promote the goal of *mutual recognition*, not rigid recognition through *conformity*. Walter Kasper explains that:

[r]ecognition means neither the resignation of one’s standpoint nor the pluralism of unconnected and perhaps contradictory standpoints. Recognition does not mean to reduce to the lowest common denominator but rather to heighten one’s own standpoint. But this heightening does not lead to separatism; rather it recognizes a legitimate pluralism in expressing “that which is held in common.”²⁵⁴

Kasper’s description of recognition encapsulates the dominant way of establishing and maintaining *koinonia* between particular churches and between particular churches and the universal church in early Christianity.²⁵⁵

Ecumenical dialogue, as an ecclesial activity, develops in relation to the diversity of particular churches. The participants of ecumenical dialogue engage one another from their particular historical/social and theological positions. According to Rahner,

²⁵⁴ Walter Kasper, “What Would Catholic Recognition of the *Confessio Augustana* Mean?,” in *The Role of the Augsburg Confession : Catholic and Lutheran Views*, ed. Joseph A. Burgess, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 124.

²⁵⁵ Gerard Kelly, *Recognition: Advancing Ecumenical Thinking*, American University Studies Series VII, Theology and Religion, (New York: P. Lang, 1996), 13-17.

separated churches enter into dialogue “each from its starting-point as previously determined by its past history.”²⁵⁶ The church carries out its activities and expressions in a *really* human fashion. In this sense, the identity of the church only emerges as a reality in the world when it embraces its dialogic structure that *resembles* the hypostatic union of Jesus Christ.²⁵⁷ The church “recollects” Jesus Christ in a manner that is similar to the way that the divinity of Jesus Christ is revealed through his humanity. In short, a similar “scandal of particularity” that marks the incarnation also marks the church.

Ecumenical dialogue seeks to develop mutual recognition between separated churches through what might be termed a “fusion of symbols.” However, recognition is always a provisional actuality. Recognition is provisional because symbols are not static realities and require ongoing understanding, explaining, and appropriating. Hence, symbols, because they are dynamic realities, run the risk of misrecognition. Walter Kasper writes:

So we bear the truth "in earthen vessels". All our concepts are limited, culturally and historically conditioned. Thus the encounter and the dialogue with other cultures can help to discover new aspects of the truth, which is Jesus Christ. Dialogue helps us to know all the depths and heights of Jesus Christ. Only when we bring in all the riches of all cultures can we know the fullness of truth in its fullness. Mission therefore is not a one-way process; mission - as it understands

²⁵⁶ Rahner, "On the Theology of Ecumenical Discussion," 59.

²⁵⁷ Karl Rahner describes the church as the fundamental sacrament. By this he means “Therefore fundamental sacrament means for us the one abiding symbolic presence, similar in structure to the incarnation, of the eschatological redemptive grace of Christ; a presence in which sign and what is signified are united inseparably but without confusion, the grace of God in the “flesh” of an historical and tangible ecclesiastical embodiment, which therefore cannot be emptied of what it signifies and renders present, because otherwise the grace of Christ (who always remains man), would also be something merely transitory and replaceable, and in the last resort we would still be under the old covenant. Consequently, because first of all and independently of the usual idea of a sacrament, we envisage the Church as the fundamental or primal sacrament, and form the root idea of a sacrament in the ordinary sense as an instance of the fullest actualization of the Church's essence as the saving presence of Christ's grace, for the individual, we can in fact obtain from this an understanding of the sacraments in general.” Rahner, "The Church and the Sacraments," 205-206.

itself today - realizes itself in a dialogical way and is connected with inculturation.²⁵⁸

Thus, through the exchange of symbols, which requires a hermeneutic other than one governed by a logic of the one over the many, ecumenical dialogue “does not produce truth; dialogue discovers the truth, which is given to us once and for all in Jesus Christ.”²⁵⁹

2.2.1 – *The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue*

Dialogue is an essential aspect of *being* human and *becoming* human. The dynamic movement between the transcendental and the categorical demonstrates the necessity of dialogue for human beings and their becoming.²⁶⁰ Ecumenical dialogue, however, is a distinctive form of dialogue in so far as it flows from the dialogic nature of the church as the people of God *and* the present-day disunity of the church.

Ecumenical dialogue is always a dialogue regarding a particular community’s interpretation and appropriation of their collective experience of God’s salvation. Angelo Maffeis is correct in acknowledging that, “before being an ecclesial fact, dialogue is a universal human phenomenon.”²⁶¹ However, as a dialogue between churches, ecumenical dialogue is also and must be a dialogue that explicitly acknowledges the mystery of God in the symbolic expressions of the other church.

Angelo Maffeis clarifies several constitutive elements that provide a helpful understanding of the structure of human dialogue. Firstly, dialogue requires at least two

²⁵⁸ Walter Kasper, “The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue,” *Ecumenical Review* 52, no. 3 (2000): 294.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ See: chapter two pp. 58-63

²⁶¹ Angelo Maffeis, *Ecumenical Dialogue* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2005), 57.

interlocutors.²⁶² As such, dialogue requires difference. Secondly, the interlocutors must have a message.²⁶³ To put it another way, the dialogue partners each have their own unique symbols. Thirdly, the goal of sharing one's message is to arouse consensus.²⁶⁴ When one's dialogue partner recognizes the truth of the shared messages or symbols, hopefully such consensus occurs. Put another way, the goal of dialogue is a consensus as mutual recognition and not by the eradication of difference. Fourthly, according to Maffei, "[c]onsensus makes possible a *communion* among the interlocutors, which through dialogue, they reach the awareness to share determined knowledge, determined convictions, and values."²⁶⁵ Dialogue allows for a conscious and intentional living *with* one another as opposed to simply living *alongside* one another. Dialogue pushes beyond the comfortable boundaries of a tolerance that "presupposes that people are safest when no one can interfere with their pursuit of their own understandings of the good."²⁶⁶ Lastly, the presupposition and result of dialogue is the capacity for common activity.²⁶⁷ The foundation of dialogue is unity-in-difference. Dialogue is possible because the partners bring a mixture of commonality and difference.

Through dialogue, Christians seek agreement and consensus that, from a postcritical perspective, is not simply an exchange of information, but instead culminates in mutual recognition between churches. Ecumenical dialogue is as much about listening to the truth of the other as it is about speaking. Karl Rahner writes:

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 58.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ David Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 57.

²⁶⁷ Maffei, *Ecumenical Dialogue*, 58.

The collective finding of truth can really and ultimately consist only in the fact that a person makes an effort in such a dialogue to recognise as his own the community which he presupposes and this in the way in which it is given in others; conversely, it means that the person lets the other recognise this community as his own just as it is given in himself and is brought before his own and the other's consciousness in the dialogue. Dialogue, therefore, presupposes and seeks unity, and lives in a genuine tension between both realities.²⁶⁸

It is through mutual recognition that separated churches come to share in and express the truth of Christ.

2.3 – *The Ecumenical Movement and the Question of Unity and Difference*

Interpreting and appropriating unity and difference within a pluralistic and globalized context presents significant challenges for the ecumenical movement in the West where metaphysical and ontological presuppositions are deeply embedded within the fabric of culture and thought. The questions and challenges facing the ecumenical movement and ecumenical dialogue in the West issue from the conflicting paradigms of pluralism and globalization on the one hand and traditional Western ontology and metaphysics on the other.²⁶⁹ Michael Kinnamon recognizes this basic tension confronting the ecumenical movement when he writes:

At the heart of the ecumenical movement is a problem that has troubled political philosophers from Plato to the authors of the United States Constitution: the relationship between the one and the many, between the unity of the community and the diversity of its particular parts. The two concepts - unity and diversity - are symbiotic. "Unity" is meaningful only if it includes in one whole things that are unlike, and "diversity" is only diverse in relation to the other distinctive parts of a whole. So the question is one of emphasis or starting point. Do we say "out of the many, one" (*e pluribus unum*) or "within the one, many"? Do we properly

²⁶⁸ Karl Rahner, "Reflections on Dialogue within a Pluralistic Society," in *Concerning Vatican Council II*, Theological Investigations (Baltimore: Helican Press, 1969), 84.

²⁶⁹ The term "paradigm" is used in the sense described by Thomas Kuhn, "an entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members or a given community." Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions: 50th Anniversary Edition*, Fourth ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 174.

speak of unified diversity or diverse unity?²⁷⁰

Kinnamon's observations illustrate the basic tensions that confront the ecumenical movement today. The above remarks, however, also express the pervasive attitude in the West to frame the challenges confronting the ecumenical movement as "problems". The penchant in Western Christianity to envision unity as a problem presents serious obstacles for both the ecumenical movement in general and ecumenical dialogue in particular. Within ecumenical literature, the relationship between unity and difference is frequently understood along the lines of primary reflection that seeks a definitive resolution.²⁷¹

The ecumenical movement and ecumenical dialogue are in need of hermeneutical resources that allow for an interpretation and appropriation of the realities of unity *and* difference in a manner that extends beyond the boundaries of primary reflection and the problematic. Put another way, there is need within both the ecumenical movement and ecumenical dialogue to think beyond the limits of a logic that is governed by the *one over the many* and a logic that is governed by the *many over the one*. Instead, ecumenical dialogue and the ecumenical dialogue are in need of a hermeneutic that supports thinking of unity and difference as mutually enriching principles; not mutually exclusive principles. The following suggests that Paul Ricoeur's understanding of recognition provides the necessary framework for a postcritical reevaluation of ecumenical dialogue and the ecumenical movement.

2.3.1 *The Course of Recognition*

²⁷⁰ Kinnamon, *The Vision of the Ecumenical Movement and How It Has Been Impoverished by Its Friends*, 51.

²⁷¹ See: chapter one pp. 35-43

A central concern of the ecumenical movement and the ultimate goal of ecumenical dialogue is fostering and developing mutual recognition between churches separated from one another. However, despite its frequent and common usage, the term “recognition” is difficult to circumscribe in the ecumenical register as it references a variety of meanings and activities.²⁷² According to William Rusch, the use of “recognition” in ecumenical literature:

...can refer to either individual components in the life of the Church – sacraments, persons, confessions – or it can refer to churches as a whole. It can be gradual or dynamic. It is primarily a spiritual process, although it is not without legal aspects. It involves questions of legitimacy... Recognition functions in the context of unity in diversity, seeking an ecumenical path between the tendency to remove all difference and opposing the inclination to settle for mere coexistence or cooperation. It affirms a certain “otherness”, resisting the urges to take over, to adopt, or to take possession. It is an ongoing process...²⁷³

The above illustrates that “recognition” is a term that on the one hand is self-evident and on the other hand is fraught with a multiplicity of meanings. Despite its commonplace appearance within ecumenical literature and discussions, “recognition” is a complex and polyvalent term that requires attention.

Recognition is interpreted most appropriately as a process. As such, Ricoeur contends that recognition begins with identification, moves towards recognizing one’s-self, and culminates with mutual recognition. Ricoeur writes:

The passage from recognition-identification, where the thinking subject claims to master meaning, to mutual recognition, where the subject places him- or herself under the tutelage of a relationship of reciprocity, in passing through self-recognition in the variety of capacities that modulate one’s ability to act, one’s “agency”.²⁷⁴

²⁷² For a useful survey of the usage of the term “mutual recognition” in ecumenical documents see: William G. Rusch, *Ecumenical Reception : Its Challenge and Opportunity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2007), 81-88.

²⁷³ Ibid., 87.

²⁷⁴ Paul Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005), 248.

The *movement* towards “mutual recognition” and the consequences inherent in such a movement for ecumenical dialogue are key themes for the present-day ecumenical movement.

In his final major work, *The Course of Recognition*, Paul Ricoeur sets out to provide a philosophical interpretation of the aporetic nature of recognition. Ricoeur writes:

It is a fact that no theory of recognition worthy of the name exists in the way that one or more theories of knowledge exist. This surprising lacuna stands in contrast to the kind of coherence that allows for the word *recognition* to appear in a dictionary as a single lexical unit, despite the multiple senses that this lexical unit embraces...²⁷⁵

Acknowledging the various lexical meanings of the term “recognition”, Ricoeur concedes that there is a “rule governed polysemy of the word *recognition* in its ordinary usage.”²⁷⁶

Ricoeur maintains that despite the various common uses of the word “recognition” there is an ordered series of meanings. Ricoeur writes:

... the passage from one meaning to another takes place by imperceptible skips. The principle of these tiny gaps lies in what is not said, the unsaid, of the prior definition, beneath which lies concealed the very generating of this ordered series of the meanings. Under the aegis of what I have called a rule-governed polysemy... the definitions run together in such a workable way that the derivation seems to flow like a continuous stream of meanings.²⁷⁷

The stream of meanings, to which Ricoeur refers, reveals the course of recognition as “a trajectory running through its [the verb *to recognize*] use in the active voice to its use in the passive voice.”²⁷⁸ In short, the path of recognition moves from the activity of recognizing towards the reality of “being recognized”. The trajectory of recognition

²⁷⁵ Ibid., ix.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 2.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 2-3.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 19.

develops in three interrelated yet distinct moments: 1) recognition as identification, 2) self-recognition, and 3) mutual recognition. As the following demonstrates, the trajectory or course of recognition suggested by Ricoeur has important implications for a postcritical assessment and application of ecumenical dialogue.

2.3.2 – *Recognition as Identification*

The course of recognition, according to Ricoeur, begins with the cognitive process of identification “in the sense of establishing a relationship of identity between one thing and another.”²⁷⁹ The problematical character of recognition as identification for modern criticism originates with the categories of the “same” and “other” in the precritical thought of Plato. With Plato, precritical Western thought envisions the relationship between one thing and another via the theory of participation.²⁸⁰ Ricoeur observes that for the precritical attitude the theory of participation circumscribes:

... the ideas of the one and the many, and the same and the other, which themselves give rise to a series of operations of conjunction and disjunction underlying the slightest operation of predication, inasmuch as to predicate one term on another is to make one idea participate in another... For example, the polarity of the same and the other turns out to overlap the dialectic of being to the extent that the *same* must be defined both “relative to itself” and “relative to something other than itself.”²⁸¹

Inheriting the precritical dialectic tension between the “same” and the “other”, the modern critical mindset’s point of departure is the conviction that identification is possible via the “royal seat of judgment.”²⁸²

Beginning with Descartes, Ricoeur maintains that “[i]n order to identify it is necessary to distinguish, and it is in distinguishing that we identify.”²⁸³ For Kant,

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 23.

²⁸⁰ See: chapter one pp. 13-21

²⁸¹ Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, 26.

²⁸² Lorenzo Altieri, *Paul Ricoeur : Honoring and Continuing the Work*, ed. Farhang Erfani (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011), 137.

however, to identify means to synthesize or bring together.²⁸⁴ Despite their obvious differences, there is an underlying commonality between Descartes and Kant. Ricoeur writes, “[f]or Descartes and for Kant, to recognize... is to identify, to grasp a unified meaning through thought.”²⁸⁵ Whether one understands identification as the activity of synthesis of the transcendental subject or as the activity of distinguishing of the *cogito*, in either case it is the activity of a subject who is the master of meaning. For both Descartes and Kant, recognizing and knowing are inextricably connected. Arto Laitinen acknowledges that in the thinking subject and the transcendental subject there is a preoccupation with certitude such that “identification is threatened not only by mistaking some individual thing for some other individual thing, but also by a failure to construe something as an individual thing at all.”²⁸⁶ Put simply, difference that cannot be cognitively mastered threatens the process of identification via distinguishing and synthesis.

Descartes and Kant envision the relationship between knowing and recognizing in such an exclusive manner that it becomes necessary to disregard or at least bracket belief and any subsequent knowledge acquired through belief. Ricoeur maintains that for the modern critical attitude phenomenological analysis reveals the disconnect between knowledge and recognition. Ricoeur explains that:

²⁸³ Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, 25.

²⁸⁴ Ricoeur writes, “The whole of the Transcendental Deduction finds itself summed up and proclaimed here: No liaison without synthesis, but no synthesis without unity, nor unity without consciousness. The sole virtue granted recognition is that it makes apparent this unity of consciousness over the object. This is why it is spoken as “recognition in concept.” In other words, recognition consists in the fact that consciousness apprehends itself only as objectified in a representation struck with the seal of necessity and of unity.” Ibid., 46.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 37.

²⁸⁶ Arto Laitinen, “Paul Ricoeur's Surprising Take on Recognition,” *Ricoeur Studies* 2, no. 1 (2011): 38.

...neither Descartes nor Kant really makes specific the “something” identified either by procedures of distinction or by procedures for placing things into relation. For Descartes, the only thing that counts is the representative value which confers a kind of being on the idea, the objective being of an idea. But this holds as much for scientific entities, for objects of perception, for persons, and finally, at the highest degree for God. For Kant, only mathematical and physical entities satisfy the criteria of objectivity delimited by the transcendental point of view, the distinct status of persons in relation to things being set aside for practical philosophy. For a philosophy of being-in-the-world, on the contrary, it is the modes of being of things in the world that is important.²⁸⁷

Hence, identification is not only accomplished by recognizing *what* something is, but also through an attentiveness to the *way* something is.

The mystery of the “other” in the play of appearance, disappearance, and reappearance reveals limits of recognition as identification.²⁸⁸ The phenomena of change comprises identification in such a way that “the work of recognition must struggle with the threat of the ‘unrecognizable’.”²⁸⁹ It is with the subject that suffers and deals with change where “[a] kind of companionship with misunderstanding, which goes with the ambiguities of an incomplete, open-ended life world, has to replace the fear of error.”²⁹⁰

In turning to the modes of being of things in the world, a wounded *cogito* emerges. There is a reversal of intentionality whereby the subject as the master of meaning is at the very least decentered. As such, the autonomous subject of the modern critical attitude, having been confronted by the mystery of the other, emerges as a humbled subject indebted to the other.

In sum, Ricoeur’s analysis of recognition as identification elucidates three successive moments within the process of recognition as identification. Identification begins with the thinking subject who distinguishes, synthesizes, and, finally in the face of

²⁸⁷ Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, 62.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 64-68.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 66.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 256-257.

the uncertainty of the mystery of the other, realizes that identification is threatened by the possibility of misunderstanding. Phenomenologically speaking, turning to the things themselves opens up a space for the mysterious other within the course of recognition. It is in turning to the things themselves that the *mystery* of the other is at last permitted to manifest itself in the space between knowing and recognizing. Recognition as identification reaches its limit when the mystery of the other presents the rational subject with the possibility of misrecognition and wounds or decenters the *cogito*'s subjectivity precisely as the sole arbiter of reality.

2.3.2.1 – *Ecumenical Dialogue and Identification*

In the twentieth century, the ecumenical movement and its dialogue in the West demonstrate a virtually ubiquitous commitment to recognition as identification. The great achievements wrought by ecumenical dialogue, especially in the last fifty or so years, are more or less achievements in the realm of recognition as identification and in particular identification via distinguishing and synthesis. The preoccupation of the ecumenical movement and ecumenical dialogue with orthodoxy evidences the Western inclination to envision recognition as identification. The German Ecumenical Study Committee's description of doctrinal consensus and its relationship to church unity illustrates such an approach to the ecumenical movement and ecumenical dialogue. The committee writes:

The starting point for doctrinal conversations is the respective *standpoint* of each confession. They discuss these standpoints in *dialogue* with the aim of reaching *doctrinal consensus*. When this consensus is achieved, it is received in the still separated churches. When the *reception process* is completed, *communion* between the churches is restored and then the unity of the church has been achieved.²⁹¹

²⁹¹ As quoted in Konrad Raiser, *Ecumenism in Transition : A Paradigm Shift in the Ecumenical Movement?* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991), 16.

Approaches like those of the German Ecumenical Study Committee envision the relationship between unity and diversity characteristic of the church's *koinonia* as a problem in need of resolution via doctrinal consensus; in short orthodoxy. This manner of thinking is undoubtedly responsible for a plethora of important discoveries, but it also presents significant limitations for both ecumenical dialogue and by extension the entire ecumenical movement. However, synthesizing and distinguishing eventually run their course and come up against their limits when confronted with the mystery of the other, as Ricoeur's analysis of the play of appearance, disappearance, and reappearance demonstrates. Change that results from reform, conversion, or novelty invariably risks misidentification.

At various points in history, Christians ceased recognizing one another. As a result, when Christians separated from one another ecclesially they also, in a manner of speaking, "disappeared" from one another. On the one hand, the circumstances of ecclesial separation supported the development of churches within a diversity of spacio-temporal, socio-cultural, and theological settings, but on the other hand the development of separated churches took place within an isolated trajectory. By contrast, the twentieth century marks a time in which separated Christians took up the challenge of recognizing one another. The work of recognition that is characteristic of ecumenical dialogue provides a context in which Christians *reappear* to one another. A great deal of difference developed among churches in the time between separation (disappearance) and the birth of the ecumenical movement (reappearance) that present significant challenges for mutual recognition between the churches of today.

Emilio Castro rightly observes that, “during the last forty or fifty years such tremendous progress has been made in discovering one another, that we are a little impatient today.”²⁹² Impatience is an apt description of the frustration that permeates the ecumenical landscape and it is such impatience that characterizes the so-called “ecumenical winter”. The “ecumenical winter”, however, is better understood as indicating the need for a transition from a critical to a postcritical paradigm. Using the language of Paul Ricoeur, the “ecumenical winter” is akin to the “desert of criticism.” Critical engagement and doctrinal consensus, however, are not the proper goals of dialogue between separated churches. Nor should one see the struggles that arise from critical engagement and the search doctrinal consensus as frustrating the movement towards ecumenical dialogue’s goal of mutual recognition. Instead, the stagnation and frustration associated with the ecumenical movement and dialogue is rooted in the necessity of an appropriate hermeneutic. Conrad Raiser explains:

Initially it was appropriate for dialogue to be used principally as a tool to identify as clearly as possible the differences and common ground between traditions of churches. The goal of this patient conversation was to take stock, soberly and honestly, in the hope that the area of common ground would gradually increase. Such dialogue was only possible under the assumption that there was as it were a spiritual communion between separated churches which was antecedent to all their efforts to overcome divisions.²⁹³

At the risk of oversimplification, Gerard Kelly contends that there are two basic hermeneutical approaches to recognition within the present-day ecumenical movement; “Catholic” and “Protestant”. Despite the obvious generality inherent in his choice of labels, Kelly provides a fruitful analysis of the predominant contemporary understandings

²⁹² Castro, “The Ecumenical Winter,” 1.

²⁹³ Konrad Raiser, “Ecumenism in Search of a New Vision,” in *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices*, ed. Michael Kinnamon and Brian E. Cope, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 14.

of the hermeneutical resources that inform recognition within the ecumenical movement and ecumenical dialogue.

According to Kelly, the ecumenical relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox evidences the “Catholic” approach to recognition.²⁹⁴ The Catholic approach envisions recognition to be characteristic of the relationship between “sister” churches. According to this approach, each church is apostolic in the fullest sense of the term.²⁹⁵ Patriarch Maximos and Bishop Zoghby introduced the idea of sister churches at Vatican II.²⁹⁶ According to Bishop Zoghby:

If the oriental Church has always recognised a primacy of the Bishop of Rome, however imprecise that may be, it has never been part of the Latin Church. It is a sister Church of the Latin Church. It does not come from the latter; nor does it owe its existence, its substance or its dogmatic and disciplinary development to the Latin Church.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁴ Kelly, *Recognition: Advancing Ecumenical Thinking*, 8-17.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁹⁶ The modern use of the term “sister churches” originates in Eastern Orthodoxy as an expression of the relationship between the Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. The term was first introduced in a letters exchanged between Patriarch Arthenagoras and Paul VI between 193 and 1965. Initially, however, while Patriarch Arthenagoras frequently employed the term “sister churches”, Paul VI referred to the relationship between the Orthodox Churches and the Roman Church using variations of the more cautious phrase of “fraternal relations.” See E. J. Stormon, *Towards the Healing of Schism : The Sees of Rome and Constantinople : Public Statements and Correspondence between the Holy See and the Ecumenical Patriarchate, 1958-1984*, Ecumenical Documents (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 53-83. During a visit between Paul VI and Patriarch Arthenagoras in Istanbul in July of 1967, Paul VI’s Message at the Latin Cathedral of the Holy Spirit evidences a marked shift in relation to the usage of the term “sister churches.” Paul VI affirms, “We lived this life of sister churches for centuries, celebrating together the ecumenical councils which defended the deposit of faith against any alteration. Now after a long period of division and reciprocal incomprehension the Lord grants us that we rediscover ourselves as sister churches despite the obstacles which were then raised between us. In light of Christ, we see how urgent is the necessity of surmounting these obstacles in order to succeed in bringing to its fullness and perfection that unity – already so rich – which exists between us.” Thomas F. Stransky and John B. Sheerin, *Doing the Truth in Charity : Statements of Pope Paul VI, Popes John Paul I, John Paul II, and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, 1964-1980*, Ecumenical Documents (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 187.

²⁹⁷ As quoted in Kelly, *Recognition: Advancing Ecumenical Thinking*, 9.

The relationship between sister churches is a relationship that originates from a shared source. In the case of the Latin and Oriental churches, there is a common “quality of life and of faith that actualises the one apostolic faith in word and in sacrament.”²⁹⁸ In short, recognition entails the acknowledgment of the *shared* apostolic faith. As such, the measure of orthodoxy is understood in terms of origin. Difference is permissible insofar as it can be identified with the apostolic faith as its origin. Hence, recognition is a function of a logic that conforms to the principle of the *one over the many*, which assumes that legitimate diversity must have a common origin.

The Protestant approach to recognition, on the other hand, emphasizes reconciled diversity.²⁹⁹ The Lutheran-Roman Catholic Study Group articulates the above approach:

Concern for an abiding truth within a diversity of traditions leads to the question of what is that foundation and centre of the gospel in relation to which the manifold witness of the church in various historical situations can be conceived as testimony and development. This foundation and this centre cannot be reduced to a theological formula, but rather is constituted by the eschatological saving act of God in Jesus' cross and resurrection.³⁰⁰

As the above demonstrates, the “Protestant” understanding of recognition tends to elevate difference and diversity. Michael Kinnamon distills three characteristics commonly employed within ecumenical literature for elevating diversity. Kinnamon writes:

(1) God alone is sovereign. All human concepts, institutions, and activities stand under judgment of the One who finally transcends all our projects and explanations. (2) Human beings are finite and sinful. Our perceptions, even of revealed truth, are always partial and in need of correction. (3) Christian faith is eschatological, which means that our historical existence must be seen in light of God's ultimate purpose and promise.³⁰¹

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 11.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 17-27.

³⁰⁰ The Joint Lutheran -Roman Catholic Study Commission on the "The Gospel and the Church," "Malta Report." in *Growth in Agreement*. ed. Harding Meyer and Lukas Vischer (New York: Paulist Press, 1972), 174.

³⁰¹ Kinnamon, *The Vision of the Ecumenical Movement and How It Has Been Impoverished by Its Friends*, 62.

Simply put, the “Protestant” understanding of recognition employs a logic that is informed by the principle of *the many over the one*. As such, the criteria for doctrinal consensus is thin when compared to the “Catholic” understanding of recognition.

What is particularly striking is that both approaches, despite employing different logics, ultimately take recourse to recognition primarily as identification insofar as approaches to recognition rely on the ability judge. Thus, recognition is achieved by either disregarding the implications of difference or excluding difference that does not conform to the standard of measurement. It is evident that both of the above approaches to recognition rely on synthesis and distinction to varying degrees. Kelly observes that Catholic and Protestant approaches to recognition demonstrate divergent understandings of communion and diversity. Kelly explains:

For the Catholic approach, diversity is understood in terms of catholicity. This means that if diversity is not to destroy unity some fundamental points of communion must be present. For the Protestant approach, communion is understood in terms of a reconciliation of the variety of denominational heritages. This means that any future union must respect confessional allegiances and identities.³⁰²

The Catholic and Protestant approaches to recognition are deeply embedded in the ecclesiological convictions of particular churches. In other words, the various ways that Church has been identified throughout Christian history sheds light onto the contemporary situation of the ecumenical movement and the diversity of approaches to ecumenical dialogue.

If ecumenical dialogue is to achieve its goal of mutual recognition, it must move beyond the confines of recognition as identification. However, moving beyond identification does not entail leaving it behind. Properly understood, ecumenical

³⁰² Kelly, *Recognition: Advancing Ecumenical Thinking*, 27.

dialogue is a dialogue of symbols, hence, the literal meaning that is achieved through identification is integral for the emergence of a symbolic meaning; symbolic meaning is always tied to, but exceeds, the literal meaning of the symbol.

2.3.3 – *Recognizing One's-Self*

The second “moment” on the course of recognition is the recognition of one's-self. Ricoeur maintains that recognizing one's-self entails a movement from an understanding of one's-self in terms of *ego sum* (I am) to an understanding one's-self in terms of *ego possum* (I can).³⁰³ The recognition of the self by the self is not primarily a theoretical knowledge; it is a practical knowledge in which one realizes recognition in “the ability to say, the ability to do, the ability to recount, and imputation.”³⁰⁴ Ricoeur explains:

In intersecting in the certitude and assurance of the “I can,” the two semantic fields of attestation and self-recognition bring to bear their respective harmonics, in this way lending richness and density to what I propose to call recognition-attestation. From which this mixture comes the certitude of assertions introduced by the modal phrase *I can*.³⁰⁵

As such, it is in and through the capacity to act and to take responsibility that the identity of one's-self emerges. However, the ability to say, the ability to do, the ability to recount, and imputation are only possible in relationship to an other. The process of recognizing one's-self obtains via the process of becoming; self-recognition means recounting one's-self in and through the practical engagement with the other by enacting one's identity in freedom and responsibility.

The reflexive consciousness of one's-self is understood via the distinction and relationship between *idem* identity and *ipse* identity. Charles Reagan explains:

³⁰³ Altieri, *Paul Ricoeur : Honoring and Continuing the Work*, 141.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, 92.

The former [*idem*] is identity through time by a sameness of appearance, characteristics, or style through which we recognize someone as the same person on different occasions, even though time has changed some of those features. The latter [*ipse*] is a constancy of character through time, in spite of all of the changes of appearances.³⁰⁶

Ricoeur argues that the recognition of one's-self attains by some form of the expression "I believe that I can."³⁰⁷ The recognition of one's-self, for Ricoeur, turns out to be bound to a narrative identity in which *ipse* identity is of vital importance.³⁰⁸ Ricoeur explains:

The difference between *idem* and *ipse* is nothing more than the difference between a substantial or formal identity and a narrative identity. Self-sameness, "self-constancy," can escape the dilemma of the Same and the Other to the extent that its identity rests on a temporal structure that conforms to the model of dynamic identity arising from the poetic composition of a narrative text. The self characterized by self-sameness may then be said to be refigured by the reflective application of such narrative configurations. Unlike the abstract identity of the Same, this narrative identity, constitutive of self-constancy, can include change, mutability, within the cohesion of one lifetime.³⁰⁹

The narrative identity of a particular community is the self-interpretation of a community amidst the reality of change and difference. As such, it is through narrative that a community understands, explains, and appropriates itself through its own history.

Narration, according to Ricoeur, is the manner in which a community comes to recognize itself as capable and responsible. On the juridical plane, Ricoeur observes that the "author is responsible for the known or foreseeable effects of his actions."³¹⁰ On the moral plane, however, "it is the other person, others, for whom one is held

³⁰⁶ Charles E. Reagan, "Paul Ricoeur's *the Course of Recognition*: His Last Work and His Last Days," *Journal of French Philosophy* 16, no. 1 and 2 (2006): 12.

³⁰⁷ Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, 91.

³⁰⁸ "Emplotment confers an intelligible configuration on a heterogeneous collection imposed of intentions, causes and contingencies. The unity of meaning that results rests on the dynamic equilibrium between a demand for concordance and the admission of discordances that, up to the close of the narrative, put in peril this identity of a unique kind." Ibid., 100.

³⁰⁹ Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, trans., Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer, 3 vols., vol. 3 (Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 246-247.

³¹⁰ Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, 108.

responsible.”³¹¹ There is an intimate relationship between the *idem* and *ipse* identities within the narrative structure of identity in so far as recognizing one’s-self is realized through memory and promises. Ricoeur explains:

In memory and promises, the problematic of self-recognition reaches two high points simultaneously. The one is turned toward the past, the other toward the future. But they need to be considered together within the living present of self-recognition, thanks to several features they have in common.³¹²

The *idem* identity is linked to memory and the *ipse* is linked to one’s promise. The attestation, “I believe that I can”, is possible only because one has good reason to believe that one is capable of acting in the future in a particular way. In short, to say “I believe that I can” requires that “I can remember” and that “I can promise.” Thus, the certitude of the recognizing one’s-self is one that is characteristic of an avowal. As such “[t]he kind of certitude” writes Ricoeur, “that characterizes avowal cannot be reduced to doxa on the theoretical level. It is a certitude *sui generis*, arising from the practical dimension of knowledge.”³¹³ Forgetting with respect to memory and betrayal with respect to promises, however, threatens the recognition of one’s-self.

Symbols occupy a central place within the narrative identity of both individuals and communities. It is through narrative identity that the interpretation of symbols is possible. However, because of the symbol’s relationship to mystery and its surplus of meaning, the symbol resists definitive interpretation by challenging the established narrative. Hence, symbols emerge within a narrative and develop the narrative identity as an identity that both interprets symbols and is interpreted by them. Douglas McGaughey writes:

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Ibid., 109.

³¹³ Ibid., 147.

Such a theory of symbol, rooted in but not confined by a narrative horizon... sees symbols as basic to the liberation of the human community. Symbols can function because they both build upon and transform their narrative horizon. Symbols call the human into temporality and history to claim ever new meaning and to announce the unexpected 'more' of experience and understanding.³¹⁴

A "living" narrative is one that both provides its own symbols and is opened up by the powerful interpretative force of such symbols. The symbol, which always evades being reduced to a definitive understanding and explanation, is appropriated in light of dialectic tension that exists between its primary or literal meaning and the symbolic meaning of the mysterious other. Hence, "[t]here is a tension of 'is' / 'is not' in the symbol that continually *forces a new interpretation* of the meaning of the symbol in the context of the symbol's narrative and the reader's life-world."³¹⁵

As is the case with recognition as identification, recognizing one's-self does not guarantee mutual recognition. Recognizing one's-self, however, does anticipate mutual recognition in so far as the capable agent recognizes one's-self as capable with respect to another. "[S]elf-recognition," writes Ricoeur, "refers to others without the position of a ground, like that of the power to act, nor does the 'before others' imply reciprocity and mutuality."³¹⁶ It is through the process of self-recognition that a second naïveté is forged in the turn towards narrative identity and symbol. Put another way, self-recognition acknowledges one's-self and the other as subjects and anticipates the possibility of inter-subjectivity, but self-recognition does not fully address the complex issue of inter-subjectivity.

Ricoeur's analysis of self-recognition offers important insights and direction for

³¹⁴ Douglas McGaughey, "Ricoeur's Metaphor and Narrative Theories as a Foundation for a Theory of Symbol," *Religious Studies* 24, no. 4 (1988): 434.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, 255.

ecumenical dialogue and its movement towards mutual recognition. The process of self-recognition signals the movement from a logic of the one over the many to a logic that is governed by a logic of symbol. In short, self-recognition is dependent on and develops the resources of a second naïveté in which interpretation, informed by the process of identification, affords the possibility of hearing again.

2.3.3.1 - Ecumenical Dialogue and Recognizing One's-Self

As the above acknowledges, the difficulties facing ecumenical dialogue are indicative of the need to move beyond recognition as identification. Willem Visser 't Hooft admits this when he states:

It seems to me that the present ecumenical situation can only be described in the paradoxical statement that the ecumenical movement has entered into a period of reaping an astonishingly rich harvest, but that precisely at this moment the movement is more seriously called in question than ever before. And once again the basic issue is that of the relation between the Church and the world.³¹⁷

Having reaped the rich harvest wrought by the process of getting to “know” one another, both the ecumenical movement and ecumenical dialogue must now contend with the reality of renewal within churches. Presently, churches involved in the ecumenical movement are caught between the juridical and moral planes. In other words, the present-day ecumenical context is characteristic of a tension between the responsibility of churches acting on their own behalf on the one hand and on the other hand the responsibility that churches have in regards to other churches. Hence, the questions facing ecumenical dialogue and the future of the ecumenical movement are directed toward orthopraxis. At the level of identification, questions of orthodoxy occupy a central place, but, at the level of recognizing one's-self, concerns emerge regarding

³¹⁷ Willem Visser 't Hooft, "The Mandate of the Ecumenical Movement, Fourth Assembly of the Wee, Uppsala, 1968," in *The Ecumenical Movement : An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices*, ed. Michael Cope Brian E. Kinnamon (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997), 38.

orthopraxis in relation to orthodoxy. Hence, the preoccupation of the ecumenical movement and ecumenical dialogue should no longer be dominated by questions and concerns of identify, but instead should be directed towards questions of how churches can actively live out their identity as Christian *with* one another, not simply alongside one another. Such a shift calls for the capacity of churches to receive the fruits of the ecumenical movement responsibly; both with respect to one's own church and the church of the other.

Dialogue without reception stagnates. Without a moment of symbolic appropriation, the understanding and explanation that occurs within dialogue remains at the level of a sharing of objective information. This type of exchange can easily fall into proselytizing or spinning one's wheels in doctrinal clarifications. Developing an understanding of reception as symbolic appropriation is integral to the success of ecumenical dialogue and its goal of mutual recognition. It is through the exchange of symbols that dialogue overcomes the threat of stagnation and irrelevance and can develop into unity. Paul Murray explains:

... for this process of overcoming stasis to begin, it requires some to take responsibility, to take the initiative, and this regardless of whether others are ready to reciprocate. As the therapeutic adage goes, 'We cannot change others. We can only change ourselves and, thereby, the way we relate to others.' But doing this will itself alter things and open up new possibilities. Similarly, the ethic at work in Receptive Ecumenism is one wherein each tradition takes responsibility for its own potential learning from others and is, in turn, willing to facilitate the learning of others as requested but without either requiring how this should be done, or even making others' learning a precondition to attending to one's own.³¹⁸

³¹⁸ Paul D. Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning—Establishing the Agenda," in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning : Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray and Luca Badini Confalonieri (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 15.

At the level of self-recognition, dialogue develops along the lines of a hermeneutic that interprets and appropriates Christian identity in a manner that extends beyond the boundaries of the propositional and definitional identity of a particular church. At this level recognition of Christian identity unfolds via a hermeneutic of symbol that develops within the narrative of a particular church but also in relation to the narrative identity of ecumenical other. As such, there is a “fusion of narratives” where separated churches can responsibly share in the life of the other. Therefore, the proper questions and concerns should be directed towards the shared activities of Christian life: worship, witness, and service.

It is at the level of self-recognition that, in humble honesty, churches recognize that they are capable and responsible agents, capable of speaking and listening and responsible for doing so before another church. As such, recognizing one’s-self is also a recognition that one’s narrative horizon is open and *receptive* to the mystery of the other.

2.3.4 – *Mutual Recognition*

The final moment on the course of recognition is what Ricoeur terms “mutual recognition.” Having passed through the moments of recognizing “something” or “someone” and recognizing “one’s-self”, Ricoeur develops mutual recognition as an “identity in mutuality,” a recognition of “one another.”³¹⁹

Ricoeur’s analysis of mutual recognition begins with an observation and warning: “mutuality runs the risk of reliance on forgetting the insurmountable difference that accounts for the fact that the one is not the other.”³²⁰ In short, mutual recognition develops along the lines of unity not absorption. Accordingly, mutual recognition, for

³¹⁹ Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, 250.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 152.

Ricoeur, is a sort of inter-subjectivity without subjects subsuming one another. “The investigation of mutual recognition” writes Ricoeur, “can be summed up as a struggle against the misrecognition of others at the same time it is a struggle for recognition of oneself by others.”³²¹ The “struggle” however is not a struggle for power or authority; it is not a struggle to subsume the many into one. Instead, Ricoeur contends that the mutual recognition is exemplified in the exchange of gifts.

Ricoeur acknowledges that gift exchange—the three-fold process of giving, receiving, and giving in return—threatens mutuality with the *obligation* for reciprocity.

Ricoeur writes:

The recourse made to a concept of mutual recognition amounts... to a plea in favor of the mutuality of relations *between* those who exchange gifts, in contrast with the concept of reciprocity that the theory places *above* social agents and their transactions.³²²

For its part, reciprocity “covers a vast territory that includes vengeance, the gift, and the market.”³²³ The focal point of reciprocity tends to emphasize the gift and return gift under the obligation of economic or value exchange where the initial gift places the other under the obligation of return gift. Ricoeur, however, maintains that the decisive category of gift exchange with respect to mutual recognition is reception.³²⁴ “Instead of the obligation to give in return,” writes Ricoeur, “it would be better, under the sign of agape, to speak of a response to a call coming from the generosity of the first gift.”³²⁵

Thus, it is by graciously receiving the initial gift that the obligation of the return is

³²¹ Ibid., 258.

³²² Ibid., 232.

³²³ Ibid., 228.

³²⁴ Ricoeur acknowledges that there must be a certain “blindness” in terms of gift exchange such that “... we can take this relationship of mutuality as a kind of recognition that does not recognize itself, to the extent that it is more invested in the gesture than the words that accompany it. It can only do so by symbolizing itself in the gift.” *ibid.*, 243.

³²⁵ Ibid.

reoriented and reflective of the generosity that led to the first gift.³²⁶ Ricoeur explains:

*A good receiving depends on gratitude, which is the soul of the division between good and bad reciprocity. Gratitude fills out the relation between gift and return gift, in decomposing before recomposing it. It puts the pair give/receive on the one side, and that of receive/return on the other. The gap that it opens between these pairs... is inexact in two ways, both as regards the value and as regards and temporal delay. For the regime of gratitude, the values of exchanged presents are incommensurable in terms of market costs, this is the mark of what is “without price” in such exchange of gifts. As for the fitting time to return the gift, we can say that it too is without exact measure. This is the mark of agape, which is indifferent about something in return, on the exchange of gifts. This gap between giving/receiving and receiving/returning is thus both opened up and bridged by gratitude.*³²⁷

According to Ricoeur, the character of the gift “stands in a complex relation with the symbolic character of recognition that... is unaware of itself, insofar as it clothes itself and conveys itself in the exchange.”³²⁸ That is, the gift presents what is other than itself. In short, mutual recognition obtains via the free and gracious exchange of symbols.

The course of recognition, as Ricoeur lays it out, is a movement from the exchange of signs to the exchange of symbols through the intermediate moment of a second naïveté in which a hermeneutic of symbol is developed. Confrontation with the reality of the unmanageable mystery of the other, which cannot be adequately interpreted and appropriated at the level of signs, demonstrates the need for a second naïveté that is governed by a logic of symbol and emerges through a narrative identity where one comes to recognize one’s-self and the other as subjects that are capable and responsible. As such, the possibility of mutuality through the free and reciprocal exchange of symbols develops.

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Ibid., 243-244.

³²⁸ Ibid., 244.

2.3.4.1 - *Ecumenical Dialogue and Mutual Recognition*

Ricoeur's understanding of mutual recognition and the "long way" to mutual recognition through its various detours provides important insights and resources for understanding the fundamental goal of ecumenical dialogue as a free and mutual exchange of symbols. It is precisely in this way that churches come to recognize one another as a gift that is beyond measure. It is necessary to reemphasize the point made earlier that neither mutual recognition nor the claim to mutually recognize one another ensures the unity of the church, nor does mutual recognition spontaneously arrive at unity. However, the unity of church in fact does require mutual recognition as a sort of prerequisite.

Understanding the goal of ecumenical dialogue as an exchange of symbols redirects ecumenical dialogue away from dialogue that focuses on the *idem* identity of the church towards the *ipse* identity of the churches. This shift in emphasis rests upon the conviction that every particular church is a unique expression of the church of Christ, but that no particular church expresses the church of Christ in its totality. This is because the literal meaning of a symbol never exhausts its symbolic meaning despite the symbolic meaning's dependence on the literal meaning; symbols are in a continuous state of flux. Thus, ecumenical dialogue is a dialogue between churches that seeks to more fully understand, explain, and appropriate the endless unfolding of the mystery of the Christ's church through the mutual exchange of the symbols of one another, which *really* are expressive of the church of Christ. The exchange that occurs at the level of mutual recognition is not an exchange of manageable commodities; instead, it is the exchange of symbols that develop out of one another's narrative identity. A complete narrative

identity, at least in regards to the churches, implies an eschatological finality that is simply not the case for any particular church.

3. – Karl Rahner and a Symbolic Approach to Ecumenical Dialogue

The preceding section argues that both the ecumenical movement and ecumenical dialogue need to rethink and reevaluate the realities of unity and difference and their relationship to one another. The rethinking and reevaluation of unity and difference necessitates hermeneutical resources that allow for the possibility of recognizing the other in a manner that surpasses the paradigm of identification. The future success of the ecumenical movement and ecumenical dialogue is dependent on the establishment of a second naïveté whereby the realities of unity and difference are interpreted and appropriated symbolically as mutually enriching realities.

This section argues that Karl Rahner's theology of ecumenism and his theology of symbol are invaluable assets for promoting the ecumenical goals of mutual recognition between churches and the realization of the unity of Christ's church. The logic of unity-in-difference that characterizes both Rahner's theology in general and his theology of symbol in particular provides a point of departure for reevaluating the aporetic relationship between unity and difference within an ecumenical context. Rahner writes:

A symbol is... not to be primarily considered as a secondary relationship between two different beings, which are given the function of indicating one another by a third, or by an observer who notes a certain agreement between them. The symbolic is not merely an intrinsic propriety of beings in so far as a being, to attain fulfillment, constitutes the differentiation which is retained in the unity, and which is in agreement with the original originating unity and so its expression. A being is also 'symbolic' in itself because the harmonious expression, which it retains while constituting it as the 'other', is the way in which it communicates itself to itself in knowledge and love. A being comes to itself by means of 'expression' in so far as it comes to itself at all. The expression, that is, 'symbol'... is the way of knowledge of self, possession of self, in general.³²⁹

³²⁹ Rahner, "The Theology of Symbol," 230.

Rahner's theology of symbol and its accompanying logic provide the means for an ecumenical interpretation of Christian identity and ecclesial identity by rethinking the relationships between 1) the transcendental and the historical, 2) orthopraxis and orthodoxy, and 3) the universal and the particular.

Firstly, this section analyzes the contemporary significance of Rahner's theology in relationship to several criticisms that demonstrate the significance of reading Rahner's theology in light of his concept of symbol. Secondly, this section develops a basic sketch of Rahner's ecumenical theology and the inherent connection between Rahner's ecumenical theology and his theology of symbol. Finally, this section argues that Rahner's ecumenical theology and theology of symbol are germane to the concerns of unity and difference that surface within present-day ecumenical dialogues and the ecumenical movement.

3.1 – Rahner's Contemporary Ecumenical Significance

Articulating the contemporary significance of Karl Rahner's theology is a daunting task for several reasons. Firstly, Rahner's theological career spans more than five decades. Rahner began his career as a theologian during a time when Roman Catholicism was absorbed by Neo-Scholastic thought. He witnessed the horror of World War II and its aftermath. He was a driving theological force at Vatican II, where he sought to foster the attitudes of the *ressourcement* movement and *Aggiornamento*. In his later years, Rahner was critical of the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church and its future. Secondly, while Karl Rahner is often labeled a systematic theologian, his theological corpus is predominately comprised of essays dealing with particular

questions. Although his individual writings demonstrate a systematic quality, it is difficult to recognize the same systematic consistency within the entirety of his work.

When asked about the nature of his theological work, Rahner commented that:

Strictly speaking I have not produced scholarly works in theology; more exactly, I have produced only very few works in theology... I only attempt to clarify those individual questions that modern readers are interested in understanding better. I would say that I have always done theology with a view to kerygma, preaching, pastoral care... In short, I am not a scholar and don't intend to be one... I want to be a Christian who takes Christianity seriously. I want to be a person who unabashedly lives in modern times and from the perspective of modernity addresses this or that, a third problem, a twentieth problem, about which one then reflects. If you want to call that a theology, well fine!³³⁰

Lastly, as he himself acknowledges, Karl Rahner is undoubtedly a modern theologian.

Steven Ogden observes, "Rahner has been immersed in modernity. Modernism plays a role in providing him with a theological agenda, critical tools and key concepts."³³¹

However, characterizations of Rahner as a modern theologian ought not overlook Rahner's criticism of modernity and, at times, his tendency to reach beyond the limits of modern thought.

An honest appraisal of the contemporary ecumenical significance of Rahner's theology must acknowledge from the outset that the concerns addressed by Rahner during his lifetime are varied and not always identical to the concerns of present-day Christianity. Hence, notwithstanding the affinity between Rahner's context and today's context, one should not assume that Rahner's theology is ubiquitous with present-day categories of thought nor the explicit concerns of contemporary ecumenical theology.

Robert Masson writes:

A new generation of scholars is raising fundamental questions about the balance,

³³⁰ Rahner, *Karl Rahner in Dialogue*, 256.

³³¹ Steven G. Ogden, *The Presence of God in the World : A Contribution to Postmodern Christology Based on the Theologies of Paul Tillich and Karl Rahner* (Bern: P. Lang, 2007), 207.

coherence, and foundations of Rahner's theology. They are bringing new questions and theological contexts to his thought and bringing Rahner's thought to bear on questions that had not been at the center of his attention – if on his horizon at all.³³²

As Masson acknowledges, two basic questions ought to mediate an apt interpretation of Rahner's contemporary significance. Firstly, how do present-day concerns inform and challenge Rahner's theology? Secondly, how does Rahner's theology inform and challenge present-day concerns?

The following sections build upon the discussion of Rahner's theology that began in chapter two and work towards demonstrating the contemporary ecumenical significance of Rahner's theology. This section argues that Rahner's theology and its accompanying logic provide a hermeneutic lens for reevaluating his theology as a resource for both the ecumenical movement and ecumenical dialogue. The present-day ecumenical relevance of Rahner's theology is dependent on its capacity to address three primary concerns of the ecumenical movement: 1) the role of history for interpreting and appropriating the unity of Christ's church with respect to a diversity of historical circumstances, 2) interpreting and appropriating the unity of Christ's church amidst the reality of political difference, and 3) the need to recognize a common Christian identity amidst a diversity of expressions.

The task of demonstrating Rahner's present-day ecumenical import is accomplished by addressing three criticisms leveled against Rahner's theology that are also characteristic of the above contemporary ecumenical concerns. Firstly, this section addresses the significance of history in Rahner's theology by engaging Fergus Kerr's criticism that Rahner's transcendental method minimizes the importance of history for

³³² Robert Masson, "Interpreting Rahner's Metaphoric Logic," *Theological Studies* 71, no. 2 (2010): 380.

the human being. Secondly, this section explores the question of the human being's political identity by addressing J.B. Metz's well known critique that Rahner's transcendental theology minimizes the necessity and priority of the political dimensions of the human being. Lastly, this section engages Hans Von Balthasar's criticism that Rahner's theology minimizes the uniqueness of Christianity and Christian identity.

3.1.1 – *Historical Identity*

Fergus Kerr's critique of Rahner's theology represents a common misreading of the turn to the subject within Rahner's theology. Kerr suggests that Rahner's turn to the subject reduces the human being to the confines of the *cogito*. Kerr's interpretation confuses Rahner's methodological starting point with the foundation of his theology. Karen Kilby summarizes such interpretations when she writes, "A common vision of the relation of philosophy to theology in Rahner's opus... has been something like this: Rahner first in *Spirit in the World*, worked out and defended his philosophical position, and then throughout his career built his theology upon this basis."³³³ However, theology, for Rahner, properly begins and ends not with the cognitive subject, but with an encounter with mystery, an encounter that, for human beings, always and only takes place in the world.

Fergus Kerr, in *Theology after Wittgenstein*, critiques the turn to the subject in modern theological discourse. In his treatment of Karl Rahner, Kerr writes:

Central to his [Rahner's] whole theology, that is to say, is the possibility for the individual to occupy a standpoint beyond his immersion in the bodily, the historical and institutional. Rahner's consistently individualistic presentation of the self emphasizes cognition, self-reflexiveness and an unrestricted capacity to know. It rapidly leaves time and place behind.³³⁴

³³³ Karen Kilby, "Philosophy, Theology and Foundationalism in the Thought of Karl Rahner," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 55, no. 2 (2002): 127-128.

³³⁴ Fergus Kerr, *Theology after Wittgenstein* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1986), 14.

Kerr maintains that the human being always appears first as a cognitive subject in Rahner's theology.³³⁵ Kerr is correct insofar as Rahner prefers to initiate discussions regarding the human being from the philosophical vantage point of the cognitive subject. However, Kerr's critique emphasizes Rahner's practical methodological entry point but fails to account for Rahner's insistence that the human being is in the first instance and always the "locus of God's self-communication."³³⁶ While Rahner's methodological entry point for theological discourse is the cognitive subject, what actually animates Rahner's theology is the dialectic relationship between transcendence *and* history, which constitutes both the human being and the experience of the human being. Leo O'Donovan argues that, properly understood, a two-fold method characterizes Rahner's theology. O'Donovan writes, "[r]epeatedly in the course of [Rahner's] writing he has emphasized that in order to treat a theological question adequately one must approach it from both a transcendental and an historical perspective."³³⁷ Rahner acknowledges that the human being is not an isolated cognitive monad separated from history and the world. Instead, Rahner admits that the human being is radically dependent. Rahner writes:

Man never establishes his own freedom in some absolute sense... He never realizes completely his possibilities in the world and in history. Nor can he distance himself from them and withdraw into the pure essence of a pseudo-subjectivity or pseudo-interiority in such a way that he could honestly say that he had become independent of the world and the history that was given him... What he experiences in himself is always a synthesis: of possibilities presented to his freedom and his disposition of self, of what is himself and what is the other, of acting and suffering, of knowing and doing, and these elements are synthesized in a unity which cannot be completely and objectively analyzed. Therefore insofar as reflection can never control or master or grasp the totality of the ground from

³³⁵ Ibid., 10.

³³⁶ Regan, 123.

³³⁷ Leo J. O'Donovan, "Orthopraxis and Theological Method in Karl Rahner," in *Proceedings of the Thirty-Fifth Annual Convention: The Catholic Theological Society of America*, ed. Luke Salm (1980), 49.

out of which and towards which the subject is actualizing himself, man is the unknown not only in this or that area of his concrete reality, but he is the subject whose origin and end remain hidden from himself. He comes to the real truth about himself precisely by the fact that he patiently endures and accepts this knowledge that his own reality is not in his own hands.³³⁸

Rahner envisions the human being as an “open system.” The human being is always in relation and in reference to the uncontrollable mystery of the other. The experience of history, culture, other human beings, and God permeate, inform, and constitute human existence. It is precisely because of the human being’s engagement with the mystery of an other that human thought arises, most often as a question. Human knowledge, concepts, and ideas always bear the mark of one’s finitude, but they also carry a trace of the hidden and mysterious God.

Kerr is correct insofar as he recognizes that Rahner carves out a privileged place for the cognitive subject in his theology. Kerr’s critique of Rahner, however, falls short as it does not take account of Rahner’s tendency to decenter the subject he so carefully constructs. Rahner writes:

As long as we measure the loftiness of knowledge by its perspicuity, and think that we know what clarity and insight are, though we do not really know them as they truly are; as long as we imagine that analytical, co-ordinating, deductive and masterful reasoning is more and not less than experience of the divine incomprehensibility; as long as we think that comprehension is greater than being overwhelmed by light inaccessible, which shows itself as inaccessible in the very moment of giving itself: we have understood nothing of the mystery and true nature of grace and glory.³³⁹

While Rahner, devotes significant intellectual energy to dealing with modern questions and addressing such questions using modern methods, tools, and concepts, Rahner also

³³⁸ Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 42-43.

³³⁹ Rahner, "The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology," 56; Ogden, *The Presence of God in the World : A Contribution to Postmodern Christology Based on the Theologies of Paul Tillich and Karl Rahner*, 206.

the consistently affirms the limits of modern methods, tools, and concepts. F.S.

Fiorenza summarizes:

For Rahner this experience [of God's otherness] is much more a questioning than a knowing. It brings to the fore the mystery of human life and the mystery of being so that the unlimitedness of the horizon of experience becomes as much a non-knowing as a knowing and becomes a quest for meaning. The answer to this quest is found in history and in the revelation of God.³⁴⁰

Rahner recognizes the relationship between transcendence and history as a dialectic relationship that is characterized by unity-in-difference. For Rahner, human knowledge and human existence are worked out and realized within the world. The human being is always a thinking and acting subject for whom thought and action are possible only within the world.

An analysis from the perspective of symbol more fully elucidates the relationship between transcendence and history. As spirit in the world, the human being exists *as* a symbolic relationship between body and spirit whereby the human being realizes himself or herself as a question. The human being symbolically experiences the transcendental and the historical aspects of human existence. In short, while distinct from another, there is an intrinsic relationship between the historical and the transcendental for the human being whereby historical experience mediates the transcendental. Rahner writes:

...the transcendental subject even in the boundlessness of his own transcendental, ultimately apprehends himself and must apprehend himself as a *question*. For he always experiences himself in this transcendental of his as open, as of himself an empty question, as that which refers beyond and outside of himself of himself that which he himself precisely is not. Now he experiences the act of self-realization of his own transcendental as communicated to him through the *a posteriori* experience of the object which of itself manifests itself or refuses to manifest itself to him. As an object in this sense the subject is not the master of

³⁴⁰ Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, "The Experience of Transcendence or the Transcendence of Experience: Negotiating the Difference," in *Religious Experience and Contemporary Theological Epistemology*, ed. Yves de Maeseneer and S. van den Bossche (Louvain: University Press, 2005), 204.

it. Nor does the transcendental enquiry in the sense we are using the term here signify any devaluation of history or the experience of that which is factual and irreducible to the transcendental.³⁴¹

3.1.2 – *Political Identity*

The second criticism this section addresses is that of J.B. Metz. Metz's critique of Rahner is similar to that of Kerr's insofar as it is concerned with the limits of Rahner's transcendental method. Metz contends that Rahner's transcendental method overshadows the political dimensions of human existence in general and Christian existence in particular. In the forward of *Spirit in the World*, Metz asks:

...does not such a transcendental-existential approach (which defines man a priori as that being characterized by absolute transcendence towards God) concentrate the necessarily historically realized salvation of man too much on the question of whether the individual freely accepts or rejects this constitution of his being? Is there not danger that the question of salvation will be made too private and that salvation history will be conceived too worldlessly, breaking too quickly the point of the universal historical battle for man? Anthropocentrically oriented theology places faith quite correctly in a fundamental and irreducible relationship with the free subjectivity of man. However, is the relationship of this faith to the world and history sufficiently preserved (*aufgehoben*)?³⁴²

Leo O'Donovan summarizes Metz's criticism as follows, "[Rahner's] approach is said to yield an appreciation not so much of contingent history as of generalized history. As a result... the method is insensitive to social problems and ineffectual in the realms of policy and social change."³⁴³ Metz, like Kerr, is concerned that Rahner's transcendental method risks the historical identity of the human being. However, for Metz the issue of historical identity ultimately raises concerns regarding the role of orthopraxis in shaping Christian identity. Hence, Metz's criticism is a political one and raises questions as to whether or not Rahner's theology adequately addresses the relationship between

³⁴¹ Rahner, "Reflections on Methodology in Theology," 88.

³⁴² Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, xvii-xviii.

³⁴³ O'Donovan, 48.

orthodoxy and orthopraxis. In short, Metz shares Charles Péguy's famous dictum that, "[e]verything begins in mysticism and ends in politics."

According to the *New Dictionary of Theology*:

Both... orthopraxis and... orthodoxy are ways of facing the issue of Christian identity as constituted by distinctive meanings and values. Properly understood, orthopraxis deals with the constitution of Christian meanings and values by concentrating on the communicative and effective functions of meaning. In contrast, orthodoxy takes the constitution of Christian meanings and values seriously by focusing upon the cognitive function of meaning, i.e., on the truth and intelligibility of Christian beliefs.³⁴⁴

Given the above descriptions of orthodoxy and orthopraxis, it is evident that Rahner tends to favor the role of orthodoxy, at least in terms of the space that he devotes to it.

However, it would be incorrect to dismiss the importance of orthopraxis for Rahner and how he envisions their relationship to one another and Christian identity. Rahner explains:

It is only in terms of this personal, social environment that man can be brought to a realization of himself as subject, and it is only in terms of this that those transcendental experiences of freedom, responsibility, absolute truth, love and personal trust are borne in upon man in which alone it can be made intelligible to him what is meant by God. For this God is not any kind of particular object side by side with many others... which impinge upon him, but rather is present to him as the ground, the horizon, and the ultimate goal of man's own personal movement outwards towards his social environment in all its complexity.³⁴⁵

Rahner affirms a certain priority of orthopraxis over that of orthodoxy as the subjectivity of the human being is realized inter-subjectively. According to Rahner, "transcendence is not primarily the condition of possibility of knowing things, but is the condition of possibility for a subject being present to himself and just as basically and originally

³⁴⁴ Komonchak et al., *Dictionary of Theology*. s.v. "Orthopraxis".

³⁴⁵ Karl Rahner, "The Church's Commission to Bring Salvation and the Humanization of the World," in *Ecclesiology, Questions in the Church, the Church in the World*, Theological Investigations (New York: Seabury, 1976), 304.

present to another subject.”³⁴⁶

Orthodoxy and orthopraxis are mutually enriching principles for Rahner. Understood from a symbolic perspective, orthodoxy and orthopraxis are both expressions of Christian identity that are rooted in and develop in relationship to transcendental and historical conditions of human existence. There is a tension that exists between the two and a constant danger of subsuming one into the other. However, orthodoxy and orthopraxis, properly understood, function as symbols of one another. The orthopraxis of a community ought to express the community’s orthodoxy and the orthodoxy of a community ought to find expression in its orthopraxis. Rahner’s commitment to orthodoxy and orthopraxis is evident in his commitment to the relationship between knowledge and love. If for Rahner knowledge is the “being-present-to-self of being”, it is the being-present-to-the-other that characterizes love.³⁴⁷ Rahner maintains that, “for a subject who is present to himself to affirm freely *vis-à-vis* another subject means ultimately to love.”³⁴⁸ Hence, subjectivity in terms of knowledge is brought to expression and realized in loving the other and it is through loving the other that human beings come to knowledge. Throughout his theological career, Rahner devotes increasing attention to the dialect of knowing and loving. Gerald McCool writes:

Man is grounded in the act of love of a free, personal subject. Consequently, he will understand himself and his ground only if he enters into God by responding to Him through the attitude of free, loving submission. The dynamism of question thus manifests that being is ultimately both personal and interpersonal... Being will be truly understood only through a free, loving response which is, at the same time, the subject’s authentic choice of himself... the subject is not only free; he is historical and communitarian... he is a member

³⁴⁶ Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 65.

³⁴⁷ See: chapter two pp. 58-59

³⁴⁸ Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 65.

of a species, who, through his freedom enters into its communal history.³⁴⁹

On the one hand, the community constitutes human beings; however, on the other hand, human beings are also capable of constituting their community. Simply put, Rahner acknowledges that human beings must express themselves in order to achieve their nature and that a human being can only express and realize himself or herself in a community and within history. Orthopraxis and orthodoxy are distinct but not separate. Thus, one can never abstract from history or from community, the identity of human beings in general, and Christian identity in particular.

3.1.3 – Christian Identity

The final criticism this section addresses is that of Hans Von Balthasar. Balthasar maintains that Rahner's use of transcendental method in both the "supernatural existential" and "anonymous Christianity" reduce the Christian message and Christian witness to a "bland Christianity not worth its salt."³⁵⁰ According to Balthasar:

[t]he attempt to *reduce* religion to ethics, love of God and personal love for Christ to love of neighbor, contradicts radically the Church's entire canon of sanctity that one would have to contrast with the tradition and dub it say, 'Neocatholicism'.³⁵¹

Balthasar's claim that Rahner's transcendental theology robs Christianity of its uniqueness fails to acknowledge that Rahner's articulation of the relationship between love of neighbor and love of God does not suggest an identity between the two, but instead, argues that love of God and love of neighbor constitute a relationship of unity-in-difference. According to Rahner, love of neighbor and love of God are inextricably

³⁴⁹ Gerald A. McCool, "Person and Community in Karl Rahner," in *Person and Community*, ed. R.J. Roth (New York: Fordham University Press, 1975), 64-65.

³⁵⁰ Declan Marmion, "Rahner and His Critics: Revisiting the Dialogue," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 68, no. 3 (2003): 197.

³⁵¹ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Moment of Christian Witness*, trans. Richard Beckley (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), 149.

united, yet they are distinct activities. Rahner argues, “the one does not exist and cannot be understood or exercised without the other, and that two names have really been given to the same reality if we are to summon up its one mystery, which cannot be abrogated.”³⁵² Hence, on the one hand the essential unity that exists between love of God and love of neighbor does not negate the distinction between the two. On the other hand, however, the unity between love of God and love of neighbor is such that it is not possible to abstract one from the other. Love of God and love of neighbor, while distinct, are always found in relation to one another in such a way that the act of loving one’s neighbor is also a response to God’s offer of God’s self in grace. Rahner writes:

the primary basic act of man who is always already ‘in the world’ is always an act of the love of his neighbour and *in this* the original love of God is realised in so far as in this basic act are also accepted the conditions of its possibility, one of which is the reference of man to God when supernaturally elevated by grace.³⁵³

According to Balthasar, Rahner secures the universality of God’s grace at the expense of belief in Jesus Christ as the particular expression of God’s redemptive love. In particular, Balthasar accuses Rahner of jettisoning martyrdom and the giving of one’s life for the sake of faith in Jesus Christ as a defining mark of Christian identity. Balthasar argues:

Karl Rahner frees us from a nightmare with his theory of the anonymous Christian who is dispensed, at any rate, from the criterion of martyrdom and nevertheless thereby has a full claim to the name Christian if he, consciously or unconsciously, gives God the honor.³⁵⁴

The tension between the universality and particularity of Christian identity lies at the center of the debate between Rahner and Balthasar. For Rahner, the act of love is always

³⁵² Karl Rahner, “Reflections on the Unity of the Love of Neighbor and the Love of God,” in *Concerning Vatican II Council*, Theological Investigations (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1969), 232.

³⁵³ Ibid., 246.

³⁵⁴ Balthasar, *The Moment of Christian Witness*.

a response to God's universal salvific will, which Rahner articulates in his concept of the supernatural existential.³⁵⁵ Rahner's conviction that love of neighbor and love God exist as unity-in-difference can be articulated as follows: there is no genuine act of love that is un-Christian. This is the case because the act of love is always a response to God's universal salvific will and as such cannot be abstracted from the reality of God's grace that the church of Christ proclaims. Hence, a positive response to God's grace is always, whether thematic or unthematic, inherently Christian. Rahner is ill at ease with confusing Christianity as a definitive expression of God's redemptive love with an exclusivist perspective. Rahner maintains that Christianity is the definitive contemporaneous symbol of God's universal salvific will, but this need not imply that the Christian community is the exclusive expression of God's salvific will. To put it another way, while the Christian community definitely expresses martyrdom, the "language" of the Christian community is not the only expression of Christian martyrdom. Hence, it is possible for God's salvific will to be manifest in a manner that really expresses God's universal salvific will outside of the boundaries of the Christian community.

Christian identity for Rahner is inherently symbolic and arises out of the complex relationships between transcendence and history, orthodoxy and orthopraxis, and knowledge and love. The bi-directional nature of the symbol that is reflective of the process of emanation and return, risks an interpretation of Rahner's theology that is one-sided and unbalanced. However, for Rahner, Christian identity is always an interpreted identity whereby history, intersubjectivity, and language are not only means to express Christian identity, but also ways of informing Christian identity. Christian identity, for Rahner, is not static. It is an identity that realizes itself in and through the world as a

³⁵⁵ See: chapter two pp. 69-73

response to the universal salvific will of God fulfilled in the person of Jesus of Christ and definitively in Christian life and belief.

Karl Rahner's ecumenical theology is an outgrowth of the theological anthropology that undergirds his understanding of Christian identity. As the above demonstrates, despite his modern context, Rahner's theology and his notion of Christian identity do not neatly fit into typical categories. Kevin Hogan writes:

[Rahner's] theological anthropology, grounded in a particular understanding of self-presence as embedded in the world, describes the human person as one in whom intersubjectivity, history, and language play central roles... Rahner's turn to the subject avoids the excesses of the postmodern dissolution of the subject as well as those of post-Cartesian modernity, and thereby offers an alternative to both.³⁵⁶

Rahner's theological method and an attentiveness to his theology of symbol have the potential to provide important resources for both ecumenical dialogue and the ecumenical movement.

According to Rahner:

... ecumenical theology cannot be confined to this interchange of information however much this may constitute the initial stage in it, and however important it may be for it not to be aimed at gaining individual converts for one's own Church. Theology has to do with truth. It is not intended merely to inform but rather to communicate truth – truth which makes valid claims upon the other party and therefore can and should be communicated by the informant only in such a way that he identifies himself with this claim to truth.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁶ Kevin Hogan, "Entering into Otherness: The Postmodern Critique of the Subject and Karl Rahner's Theological Anthropology," *Horizons* 25, no. 2 (1998): 182.

³⁵⁷ Rahner, "On the Theology of Ecumenical Discussion," 30.; Paul Murray shares Rahner's caution regarding the limits of information exchange. Murray writes, "... unless this commitment to transformational receptivity be made the explicit driving-motor of ecumenical engagement then no amount of refined conceptual clarification and reconciliation of differing theological languages alone will lead to real practical growth and change in the respective lives of the participating churches. Indeed, the conviction is that the strategy of conceptual and grammatical clarification, if pursued in isolation, is in danger of simply reinforcing each sponsoring church within its own current logic, even whilst clarifying that it need not be seen as being in necessary conflict with the differently expressed logic of other traditions. In this manner, a problem-driven strategy of conceptual and grammatical clarification would, on its own,

Rahner astutely acknowledges that one cannot confine the goal of the ecumenical movement and ecumenical dialogue to the level of recognition as identification. Instead, there is a need to identify one's-self more deeply with the truth that all Christians profess. In and through ecumenical dialogue, the ecumenical movement must reorient itself towards developing the interpretative resources required to recognize the truth that all Christians share. In short, there is a need to recognize one's-self in the other.

3.2 – Karl Rahner's Ecumenical Theology

Since the time of the Reformation, difference and variety have developed and accumulated between separated churches in the West. While the basic concern for the unity of the church is not new, the divisions within the church today yields a unique situation with distinct challenges. Unlike the present context, disagreements between Christians in the West, even during the time of the Reformation, were essentially “family” disputes that took place within a shared context. Rahner writes:

This common self-understanding, this homogeneity at the verbal and conceptual levels on which each side was operating, derived, of course, from a fairly widespread cultural unity and shared experience, both of them rather narrow and, as a whole, easy to keep in mind. It was like a conflict between brothers and sisters of the same family.³⁵⁸

The context of the church today, however, is remarkably different. One can no longer assume that churches share a cultural unity, common understanding of the church, or common experience. In short, until recently Christianity, especially in the West, enjoyed

basically leave the respective churches continuing on their separate ways, relatively unchanged apart from enjoying better terms and greater mutual understanding than before.” Murray, 14.

³⁵⁸ Karl Rahner, “Realistic Possibility of a Unification in Faith?,” in *Human Society and the Church of Tomorrow*, ed. Paul Imhof, Theological Investigations (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 69.

a certain homogeneity that is simply no longer the case.³⁵⁹

According to Rahner, the homogeneity of the Hellenistic/European paradigm is transitioning towards a globalized and pluralistic paradigm. “The emergence of the Church as a world-church” Rahner writes, “is in fact... brought about by a newly emerging unity of humankind and by the ensuing development of global social activity and planning for this unified humankind.”³⁶⁰ The emerging unity of humankind to which Rahner refers is a unity that flourishes in relation to difference. Put simply, the church is beginning to recognize that the unity of the church is not achieved by conformity to identical expression; instead, the unity of the church is better understood and explained as a unity-in-difference.

Rahner suggests that the possibility of ecumenism emerges in the present globalized and pluralistic paradigm, but notes that the *raison d'être* of ecumenism owes itself to another origin. Rahner explains:

...it must be unreservedly conceded that for ecumenical dialogue and ecumenical theology in the form in which it appears today a liberal humanism, with its defence of freedom of opinion and faith within a pluralistic society, has been, and still is, the occasion and the context without which the pursuit of ecumenical theology as it *de facto* exists today is inconceivable. This historical necessity for this liberalism... does not need to be denied, and must not be glossed over... This liberalism, however, is hardly the true ground, the ultimate *fons et origo*, of the ability which the separated parties have of conducting a dialogue today. So we

³⁵⁹ This does not suggest that until recently the church enjoyed the absence of diversity and difference. The homogeneity of the church was in large part reflective of the philosophical, theological, and sociocultural context. Rahner clarifies this when he writes, “The world constituted by this intellectual pluralism also exists in the Church. For her members themselves live in the situation constituted by this intellectual pluralism, and for that very reason an interior dialogue is necessary in the Church. The situation of a world that is intellectually homogeneous and easy to comprehend is coming to an end within the Church as well. Since the French revolution and the restoration of the Church from the nineteenth century onwards a remarkable intellectual homogeneity ... has prevailed in the Catholic Church even though it has not been without certain ghetto-like traits.” Karl Rahner, “Dialogue in the Church,” in *Writings of 1965-1967*, Vol. 2, Theological Investigations (New York: Seabury Press, 1977), 107.

³⁶⁰ Rahner, “Perspectives for Pastoral Theology in the Future,” 109.

must not confuse the essential basis for a given phenomenon with the historical situation in which such an essential basis becomes effective.³⁶¹

Rahner admits that the present sociocultural and philosophical milieu provides the awareness and the resources for ecumenism to emerge, but that the source and foundation of ecumenism is the belief that all Christians already possess God's justifying grace.

Rahner writes:

The ultimate basis of ecumenical theology is that unity, apprehended in hope, which consists in a belief in justifying grace, a belief which, even though in its theological formulation and its explication in credal form it is still in process of being arrived at, is nevertheless already in existence as one and the same belief in both of the parties involved in ecumenical theology.³⁶²

The above elucidates several of Rahner's fundamental convictions regarding ecumenism.

Firstly, all churches are in the process of becoming. As such, no particular church can claim to have a monopoly on the church of Christ.³⁶³ Secondly, churches are realized both *ad intra* and *ad extra* symbolically and, as such, each particular church brings about the justifying grace of God within the diversity of concrete circumstances of the world. Thirdly, there is a preexistent unity among churches despite the present state of visible disunity. Lastly, the unity that the church strives to realize has a vertical and horizontal dimension. The church endeavors to unite *all* of humanity with God. Thus, the church is a communion of human beings in communion with God.

Jeannine Hill Flectcher provides a valuable summary of Rahner's understanding

³⁶¹ Rahner, "On the Theology of Ecumenical Discussion," 33.

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ The notion of "subsists" recognizes the distinction between the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Christ. It holds that the fullest and most meaningful expression is the Roman Catholic Church and places itself at the center of ecumenical relationships. *Lumen Gentium* articulates the conviction shared by Christian churches; put simply, it is the belief that one's own community mediates the fullness of the Church of Christ in a way that cannot be claimed by other Christian churches. If this conviction is interpreted by way of western ontology, it is problematic. Such an interpretation implies that conversion to one's own expression is required.

of unity and difference and the significance of their interrelated roles within ecumenism.

She writes:

... in the ecumenical process, Rahner saw difference as a valuable quality reflecting the diverse receptions of God's presence in Christ. Here "the treasure of all the churches together is not only quantitatively but qualitatively greater than the actual treasure that can be found in a single church." The particularities engendered by different sociological configurations of Christianity are to be preserved as valuable in their distinctiveness. This principle of ecumenism is a theological principle born of a sociological reality.³⁶⁴

For Rahner, ecumenism does not realize its goal by establishing a third church, nor by conforming to a particular church, nor by an uncritical acceptance of difference. Instead, ecumenism achieves its goal through the mutual recognition of churches as living in a unity characterized by diversity and difference.

3.2.1 – Karl Rahner's Theology of Unity

The theme of unity-in-difference permeates Karl Rahner's writings. It is evident that Rahner's conception of unity is interrelated with his theological understanding of symbol. Unity is essential for understanding how Rahner envisions the church, ecumenism, and ecumenical dialogue. Rahner explicitly develops a theology of unity in his essay *Unity of the Church – Unity of Mankind*.³⁶⁵

With Thomas Aquinas, Rahner affirms that, "plurality as such is not a ground of unity."³⁶⁶ Rahner, along with scholastic tradition, contends that unity precedes plurality.³⁶⁷ He writes:

³⁶⁴ Jeannine Hill Fletcher, "Karl Rahner's Principles of Ecumenism and Contemporary Religious Pluralism," *College Theology Society Annual* 46 (2000): 189.

³⁶⁵ Karl Rahner, "Unity of the Church - Unity of Mankind," in *Concern for the Church*, Theological Investigations (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 154-172.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 154.

³⁶⁷ Fletcher, "Karl Rahner's Principles of Ecumenism and Contemporary Religious Pluralism," 187. Rahner maintains the Thomistic claim of God's simplicity to ensure God's unity of Being, but this does not rule out the idea that from the human perspective this infinite

...what is absolutely disparate, that which has nothing in common in any respect, in any way, is impossible and inconceivable. And, conversely, everything that is, that is possible and conceivable, rests on an ultimate solidarity which both embraces the differences of existents from one another and the differences between existentiality and knowability, between subject and object, and means in the last resort what we understand by God: the unity that exists in itself, preceding all plurality and sustaining all diversity³⁶⁸

Theologically speaking, God is the unity that precedes and sustains all plurality and difference.³⁶⁹ With this in mind, Rahner advances a theology of unity that considers three aspects: 1) unity as existing, 2) unity as task, and 3) unifying unity.

Firstly, Rahner contends that everything that exists possesses an internal unity as well as a unity with every other thing that exists.³⁷⁰ On the one hand, everything in existence is itself a unity-in-diversity. On the other hand, an individual existent is only an individual in relation to the difference of the other. Consequently, at least in terms of unity as existing, the identity of an individual existent is given to it. Simply put, an individual existent does not create the unity that is a quality of its own existence. It is a unity that it receives by virtue of existing.

Secondly, the unity of oneself and the unity of oneself with another is “already” a reality, but “not yet” at its goal; it is already in so far as it exists and not yet in so far as it has a transcendental goal. The reality of unity, thus, entails a process of *becoming*.

Rahner writes:

If and in so far as each individual existent with its initial unity belongs to the world of *becoming* and unity is a transcendental determination of every existent as such... then to every existent there belongs also a unity imposed on it *as a task*, a

simplicity contains all that we see as endless complexity. Read as the inexhaustible source of complexity, God's incomprehensibility encountered in transcendence opens one up to the unlimited expanse of all possible reality.

³⁶⁸ Rahner, "Unity of the Church - Unity of Mankind," 154.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 154-155.

³⁷⁰ Rahner's understanding of initial unity is strikingly similar to Paul Ricoeur's notion of the *idem* identity and the *ipse* identity. See: Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 113-168.

*unity still to be realized as telos (goal) of its becoming.*³⁷¹

Unity is not only *given* as existing; it is also *to be acquired* as a task. Unity is realized as a task through human freedom and in human history. The unity that is realized in freedom and in history, however, is always provisional and tentative because it is unity in the process of becoming; unity as task is not unity at its transcendental goal.

A proper analysis of unity as a task lies within the realm of phenomenology. This is something that Western ontology and metaphysics tends to overlook. Thus, according to Rahner, a proper analysis of unity is a dialectical one that requires both phenomenological and ontological/ metaphysical analysis.

As a task, unity develops in relationship to the decisions of human beings as free and responsible subjects. Unity's concrete expression unfolds and develops within humanity's history and is determined by it to some extent. Thus, at least in theory, as a developing reality, unity's concrete expression can legitimately vary from one context to another. Rahner writes:

There are processes within a historically existing reality which at least can be recognized as legitimate by the nature of this existing reality even though they spring from a free decision and even though these processes and decisions cannot be proved to be the only possible ones, and hence cannot be proved to be the only obligatory means for the nature of the historically evolving reality.³⁷²

Unity as a reality unfolds within the world of becoming through the concrete choices and activity of human beings. Thus, when unity legitimately becomes a concrete and visible expression, it does so in accord with its nature, but this need not imply that all expressions of unity are identical. In short, it is possible to manifest unity through a variety of expressions and choices that are all in accord with the nature of unity. Thus, it

³⁷¹ Rahner, "Unity of the Church - Unity of Mankind," 155.

³⁷² Karl Rahner, "Reflections on the Concept of *Jus Divinum* in Catholic Thought," in *Later Writings*, Theological Investigations (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1966), 228.

is possible for unity as a task to unfold and develop along a variety of paths with respect to different and legitimate processes and decisions.

Lastly, Rahner attends to what he terms unifying unity. Both unity as task and unity as existing are sustained by God's unifying activity. "[T]he *already present unity* of the individual existent and the *unity to be acquired* of the existent coming to be" writes Rahner, "presuppose an ultimate *unifying unity*."³⁷³ Hence, God is both the origin and the goal of unity. Rahner writes:

The unity by which we can really live is not the abstract or creaturely unity of the idea, or the unifying basis of our own nature, but rather the 'superessential' unity which by grace becomes more interior to us than the unity of our being, and which, nevertheless, is not our own... In this unity which is full of content, therefore, the conflict which takes place within our own being between diffusion and compression, extroversion and introversion... is reconciled without thereby disappearing altogether.³⁷⁴

Once again, Rahner affirms the dialectal relationship between phenomenology and traditional ontology/metaphysics.

At first glance, Rahner's proposal on unity appears to be characteristically onto-theological. However, one must recall that Rahner understands God to be the ever-present and eternal mystery, infinitely knowable. Thus, God is not posited to avoid an infinite regress, nor is God employed to grasp at the ungraspable. In short, Rahner does not present God as the ground and *telos* in order to establish a solution to the "problem" of unity. For Rahner, the Trinity is the source and the goal of all that exists as the mystery that unfolds in human history like the ever-receding horizon. Rahner writes:

The unity to be achieved of an increasing interiorization and the increasingly far-ranging quest to include a wider environment are correlative. But this implies that the increasingly close approach to the unity to be achieved carries with it a

³⁷³ Rahner, "Unity of the Church - Unity of Mankind," 156.

³⁷⁴ Karl Rahner, "Unity-Love-Mystery," in *Further Theology of the Spiritual Life 2*, Theological Investigations (New York: Seabury, 1977), 233.

continual growth of internal and external elements of that unity. In this way unity as task remains within the world of becoming and of history as such always as a goal approached merely asymptotically, never finally attained, since advancing unity is always producing new material that has still to be integrated into unity.³⁷⁵

As the ground and transcendent goal of unity, God is never fully grasped, comprehended, or conceptualized, but the human being does really experience and encounter God even if it is an unthematic involvement.

It is apparent that Rahner's logic of symbol underlies his theology of unity. Unity that already exists as a reality is distinct from the unity that is in the process of *becoming* realized in time and space as a task via the free activity of human beings aided by the unifying grace of God. The task, which visibly manifests the unity that already exists, really does effect what it signifies. Simply put, unity as a task is not identical to unity as existing or unifying unity, but unity as a task really brings about or effects the unity that it signifies; unity is realized or becomes a categorical and concrete reality as task.

Rahner is careful to acknowledge that the task and goal of unity is not the homogenization of diverse subjects, but instead the task and goal of unity is the reconciliation of "innumerable subjects, each different from others and simultaneously possessing the whole in each individual and each in a unique way."³⁷⁶ Thus, again Rahner affirms that unity is always a unity-in-difference not a unity-in-conformity.

As free personal subjects, human beings only asymptotically realize unity in history by loving the other. Rahner defines love in this context as "...wholly the consummation of unity in accepting the absolute otherness of *everyone* else (in accepting *this* other as one's very own) and thus the reconciliation between universal unity and

³⁷⁵ Rahner, "Unity of the Church - Unity of Mankind," 156.

³⁷⁶ Ibid., 157.

enduring plurality, which itself is accepted as good, as its own, by the loving subject.”³⁷⁷

Theologically speaking, one achieves unity by loving one’s neighbor.³⁷⁸

Rahner argues that recognizing the unity between love of neighbor and love of God is essential for the mission of the church in a secularized world that tends to deconstruct and demythologize everything.

At all events, in the concrete and present situation is such that... only where, and to the extent, a man has a genuine, loving and heartfelt relationship with his fellow men, does he find God and can he convince other men that this reality which we call God exists. All merely theoretical talk on the subject, all worship even, everything explicitly religious would no longer appear credible to people today unless it were based on, comprised in and attested by genuine love, and that means love between human beings.³⁷⁹

The call to love one’s neighbor, for Rahner, is rooted in the Christian conviction that God calls all of humanity along with its plurality and difference into existence (existing unity) and that God also calls all of humanity towards a common salvific destiny (unifying unity). However, in between origin and end, human beings realize in history God’s loving self-communication whenever they in freedom and responsibility manifest God’s command to love the other.

To place the above observations within a Trinitarian framework, the original unity of God’s creation, which is destined for the common fulfillment of redemption in and through the person of Jesus Christ, is realized in the sanctifying activity of the Holy Spirit. Simply put, creation, propelled by the Spirit, is in movement towards redemption. As the following demonstrates, the church has a particular role and responsibility for unity and its expression within the economy of salvation and humanity. In sum, the

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

³⁷⁸ Rahner takes up the unity between love of neighbor and love of God in Karl Rahner, *Everyday Faith* (London: Burns & Oates, 1968), 104-117.

³⁷⁹ Ibid., 105.

unifying love of God recollects unity as task and unity as reality when it is expressed in the activity of loving one's neighbor. Thus, as the following demonstrates, the unity the church seeks, ecumenism, and its accompanying dialogue is a unity that must lovingly afford a place for the other and difference.

3.2.2 – Rahner and the Symbolic Nature of Ecumenism

Rahner understands the importance of both unity and diversity within ecumenism and he acknowledges that interpreting the relationship between unity and diversity in the separated churches is a continuing task that, rooted in the ever-unfolding mystery of God, does not conform neatly to a particular church's system of thought. Rahner explains:

...it would be preposterous and un-Christian for the Christian churches simply to carry on, conservatively, in their traditional *status quo*. They can keep their lawful inheritance for the future only if they are willing to change. They must be attuned to their times. This does not mean that everything is allowed, that alien fashions are arbitrarily accepted. It means an ever renewed and radical return to the innermost heart of the faith, to which both Christians and the churches must bear witness. Christians must become more Christian; then automatically they will come closer to each other. What is required is not a liberalizing diluting of Christianity into a worldwide humanism.³⁸⁰

The unity of the church sought by ecumenism is a reality that hinges on the symbolic competence of churches and individual Christians in relation to Jesus Christ. In other words, as the particular churches mature and become more effective symbols of Jesus Christ, so too will the particular churches draw closer together in unity.

Rahner offers two theses that highlight the importance of a logic governed by symbol for ecumenism. Firstly, while acknowledging the diversity of particular churches without minimizing the significance of their diversity of expression, Rahner contends that the nature of ecumenism is ultimately rooted in the belief that all Christians "live in the

³⁸⁰ Rahner, "Ecumenical Togetherness Today," 84-85.

grace of God, are truly justified by the Holy Pneuma of God, and are sharers in the divine nature.”³⁸¹ Rahner explains that the nature of ecumenism:

...is the unity, apprehended in hope, of a belief in justifying grace which already exists and is identical in both sides, yet which, so far as theology is concerned together with the creedal formula which gives it conceptual expression, is still in process of being achieved.³⁸²

By its nature, the ecumenical movement is an interpretative movement built upon the conviction that all Christians share in and are already united in the same justifying grace of God. It is an interpretive movement that treats expressions of belief that are in the process of becoming.

Rahner’s second thesis contends that, “that which most of all constitutes ecumenical theology is the theology of the future, which has to be worked out by all the Churches each from its own point of departure as already laid down by its past history.”³⁸³ The ecumenical movement, as an interpretative movement, is bound to prejudices of the particular churches. However, the past prejudices of the separated churches are necessary in order for a fusion of horizons to occur. Hence, the ecumenical movement is also a dialogic movement.

As such, ecumenical dialogue is grounded in and must be aware of theological anthropology. Rahner writes:

...all statements made by a theological anthropology can be read as – and are only correct if they are read as – warnings not to stop in an anthropological statement at any point short of the one where these statements in an apophatic anthropology are dropped into *the incomprehensibility of God*. Theological anthropology is only truly anthropological when it really sees itself as *theology* and loses itself in that. But theology is theology only when it becomes the acknowledgment of God’s incomprehensibility, before which we can only fall dumb in adoration; before which and towards which we exist, whether we wish to or not; being able

³⁸¹ Rahner, "Some Problems in Contemporary Ecumenism," 249.

³⁸² Ibid., 248.

³⁸³ Ibid., 252.

only to choose whether to accept this exposure to the mystery *per se*, entering into it in believing liberty, or whether to repress it skeptically.³⁸⁴

From an anthropological standpoint, the human being's capacity for dialogue safeguards the human being from the trap of Cartesian interiority. The ability to dialogue validates the human being's capacity for self-realization in and through the other; human beings become via dialogue with an other. "Dialogue" writes Kasper, "is an indispensable step along the path towards human self-realization. Personal identity is a dialogical identity and not an identity closed in upon itself."³⁸⁵ Rahner claims that on both the personal and social levels the necessity of dialogue intensifies with the present-day situation of pluralism. Rahner writes:

For better or for worse, everyone has become everyone else's neighbour. If, therefore, one does not want to hold the absurd opinion that the existence of man can be regulated and preserved in the same living space independently of his views and opinions – in other words, that culture is not at all important for life in the biological and civilisational, social plane of human existence – then in that case dialogue between world-views becomes possible and indeed necessary for life. No world-view in this unity of the spiritual-personal *and* bodily-social existence of man can possibly renounce objectifying itself bodily and socially into at spatio-temporal, social space of human existence which is common to everyone; it cannot possibly withdraw itself and more into an interiority' which has nothing to do with anyone else.³⁸⁶

Rahner understands that that the process of globalization is a reality that both unites and diversifies. Accordingly, Rahner offers two principles that reflect both the possibility and fruitfulness of dialogue within a pluralistic context. Firstly, Rahner holds that every particular worldview is subject to history.³⁸⁷ As such, it is possible to acknowledge the

³⁸⁴ Karl Rahner, "The Theological Dimension of the Question About Man," in *Jesus, Man, and the Church*, Theological Investigations (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 61.

³⁸⁵ Kasper, "The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue," 293.

³⁸⁶ Rahner, "Reflections on Dialogue within a Pluralistic Society," 35.

³⁸⁷ Rahner comments that, "They [word-views] have a particular point of departure, a finite inherited vocabulary, a *difference* between what is really meant but merely formally anticipated – as it were abstractly presupposed without any concrete experience – on the one

incompleteness of the expression of a universal truth without thereby denying truth as such. Rahner maintains that, “[i]t belongs to the nature of a universal world-view to appeal to its own future and to accept its own eschatological character which calls its own present before the tribunal of self-criticism and places it under the judgment of the future.” Secondly, Rahner argues that dialogue is possible and fruitful within the context of a radical openness to otherness. Daniel Pekarske summarizes Rahner’s point when he writes that

Dialogue is possible where one seeks the total inclusion of the existential experience of the other, without which we cannot understand or judge the other’s universal claim. These are the grounds for ongoing dialogue which today demands more than toleration. It demands risking oneself. It demands commitment, humility, and in the final analysis, love.³⁸⁸

Rahner’s understanding of dialogue elucidates both its symbolic orientation and the importance of recognizing the other as both a real partner and as a mystery. Rahner’s understanding of dialogue also demonstrates his predilection and inclination for thinking postcritically. Dialogue is always an interchange of symbols that arise out of a situation and context other than one’s own. Dialogue begins by allowing the mystery of the other to offer itself. The symbols that present the mystery of the other are not initially one’s own symbols; however, dialogue seeks to develop a mutual recognition whereby one not only allows the other to be other, but recognizes the other as other.³⁸⁹

hand, *and*, on the other hand, what is concretely realised, i.e. what is experienced, the particular historical conception and view in which they render present what they really mean.” Ibid., 36-37.

³⁸⁸ Daniel T. Pekarske, *Abstracts of Karl Rahner's Theological Investigations 1-23*, Marquette Studies in Theology (Milwaukee, Wis.: Marquette University Press, 2002), 178.

³⁸⁹ According to Kasper, “[d]ialogue... is not only dialogue by words and conversations; it is much more than a theological or academic exercise. Dialogue encompasses all dimensions of our being human; it implies a global, existential dimension and the human subject in his or her entirety. Dialogue is communication in a comprehensive sense and means ultimately living with one another and for each other. Kasper, "The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue," 293.

3.2.3 – *The Unity of the Churches*

In 1983, Karl Rahner and Heinrich Fries put forth a bold and provocative proposal for the unity of the churches. Together, Fries and Rahner set out a hopeful and optimistic path for unity between separated churches. They argue that the unity of the separated churches is not only an actual possibility, but that it is one of the highest priorities for the churches. The Fries-Rahner proposal for unity, however, has essentially fallen to the wayside within ecumenical literature. While most references to the proposal amount to passing acknowledgements or footnotes, its actual value remains largely unassessed.

The Fries and Rahner proposal provides eight theses for the unity of particular churches currently separated from another.³⁹⁰ Each of the eight theses is directed towards establishing the conditions for unity among churches. As a basic principle, Fries and Rahner write:

When establishing such conditions, each church would have the duty and responsibility-derived from the commandment of Jesus-to expand its own conditions no more than is clearly commanded by its own religious conviction of what is important to salvation. This should be done with real courage, and some perhaps weighty doubts should be left aside.³⁹¹

Fries and Rahner maintain that the stagnation and immobility of the ecumenical movement issues from a “tactical caution” on the part of the churches whereby “[t]hey do not really come out courageously with declarations as to what the conditions are under which they are really prepared to unite with other churches.”³⁹² The intention of this

³⁹⁰ “The commentaries [addressing each of the eight theses] have been divided between the two authors [Fries and Rahner]. Although both authors are responsible for all of them, they disclose the individual literary style of each... The commentaries to theses I, IVa, V, VI, and VIII were written by Heinrich Fries; theses II, III, IVb, and VII were commented upon by Karl Rahner.” Heinrich Fries and Karl Rahner, *Unity of the Churches: An Actual Possibility* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 6.

³⁹¹ Ibid., 9.

³⁹² Ibid.

section is to develop the main contours of the Fries-Rahner proposal for the unity of the churches. A fuller evaluation of the practical implications of the proposal will be addressed in chapter five.

The first of the theses that Fries and Rahner put forth contends that, in terms of identification, churches are bound to recognize the Sacred Scriptures and the early creeds of the church as the basic truths that are common to all Christians. Fries and Rahner write, “[t]he fundamental truths of Christianity, as they are expressed in Holy Scripture, in the Apostles' Creed, and in that of Nicaea and Constantinople are binding on all partner churches of the one Church to be.”³⁹³ Hence, the early creeds of the church and the Sacred Scriptures have a normative function within the churches. However, despite their normative character, Scripture and the early creeds of the church are expressions of God’s mystery subject to various interpretations. Fries writes:

Although the fundamental truths of Christian faith have been formulated in the Confession of Nicaea and Constantinople, this does not exclude but instead includes their further interpretation and development, through all those motivations and challenges that determine the history of faith and of theology, and also of dogmas.³⁹⁴

Thus, Rahner and Fries affirm that the unity of the churches requires that churches mutually acknowledge that their particular interpretations are interpretations of a common faith expressed in the Sacred Scriptures and early creeds that arise within an open-ended life world. In short, the diverse historical circumstances of each church are to be respected by all other churches insofar as the diversity of interpretations that arise in relationship to the unique history of particular church share in the common connection to the early church as it is expressed in Sacred Scripture, in the Apostle’s creed, and in the

³⁹³ Ibid., 13.

³⁹⁴ Ibid., 20.

creeds of Nicaea and Constantinople.

The second thesis of the Fries-Rahner proposal for the unity of the church takes up the difficulty of navigating the demand for truth within a pluralistic context and implicitly acknowledges the need for a second naïveté. Rahner maintains that not all truths have the same existential significance for individuals and communities, for example, the truth of gravity and the truth of plate tectonics. Gravity tends to have an existential significance greater than plate tectonics even to the extent that practically speaking plate tectonics is irrelevant. This, however, may not be the case for individuals and communities living near the San Andreas Fault; the truth of plate tectonics for these communities and individuals understandably has an existential proximity and significance that others would not enjoy. This sort of differentiation applies to the truths of Christianity as well. Rahner writes:

Nothing may be rejected decisively and confessionally in one partner church which is binding dogma in another partner church. Furthermore, beyond Thesis I no explicit and positive confession in one partner church is imposed as dogma obligatory for another partner church. This is left to a broader consensus in the future. This applies especially to authentic but undefined doctrinal decrees of the Roman church, particularly with regard to ethical questions. According to this principle only that would be done which is already practice in every church today.³⁹⁵

Thesis II confronts the issue of consistency and change as well as particularity and universality within Christianity. It also acknowledges the necessity of addressing one another's narrative identities. In short, the stability and normative quality of the early creeds and Scripture cannot simply negate the differences that have developed in the faith awareness of particular churches.³⁹⁶ With respect to such differences, Rahner calls for an epistemological tolerance that reserves judgment with respect to conflicting dogmatic

³⁹⁵ *ibid.*, 25.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

and ethical statements. The need for an epistemological tolerance is particularly apropos for the contemporary relationship between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church. As chapter five expounds, much of the tension and many of the disagreements that continue to develop between both communions, especially with regard to divergent ethical teachings on birth control, sexuality, divorce to name only a few, issue in part from divergent cognitive dispositions. Conflicting ethical positions need not be interpreted in all instances as an affront against unity. In fact, Rahner claims that too often the ethical and dogmatic criteria for ecumenical unity that is out forth by churches is more rigid than the practical ethical and dogmatic requirements to belong to a particular church. Hence, Rahner maintains that the ecumenical movement would benefit from churches extending the same epistemological tolerance to one another that extend to their members.³⁹⁷ Rahner writes:

From the viewpoint of dogma, a unity of the churches is already possible today with this kind of epistemological tolerance. A consequence of this tolerance is that one does not cram radically contradictory but definite and explicit teachings together, and yet one makes room for the not-yet-agreed-upon but nevertheless acknowledged as agreed-upon. This sentence may seem daring, utopian, and perhaps even dogmatically controversial. But if one rejects the notion that a unification of the churches is simply impossible in today's intellectual-political circumstances-a notion surely prohibited by the fundamental convictions of Christianity and the Church-then one will have to admit that in today's intellectual climate no unity in faith is possible other than the one just proposed.³⁹⁸

It is at the level of self-recognition that, in humble honesty, churches recognize that they are capable and responsible agents, capable of speaking and listening and responsible for doing so before another church. As such, recognizing one's-self is also a recognition that one's narrative horizon is open and *receptive* to the mystery of the other.

³⁹⁷ Rahner, "Realistic Possibility of a Unification in Faith?," 73.

³⁹⁸ Fries and Rahner, *Unity of the Churches: An Actual Possibility*, 38.

Rahner understands the goal of ecumenical dialogue as an exchange of symbols and redirects ecumenical dialogue away from discussions that emphasize the *idem* identity of churches towards the *ipse* identity of the churches. This shift in emphasis rests upon the conviction that every particular church is a unique expression of the church of Christ, but that no particular church expresses the church of Christ in its totality. In other words, Rahner challenges the churches of the ecumenical movement to suspend ontological judgments in order to approach and recognize the Christian other. Put within the framework of a logic that is governed by symbol, as symbols the literal meaning expressed by particular churches never exhausts the symbolic meaning of a church despite the symbolic meaning's dependence on the literal meaning; as symbols churches are in a continuous state of flux. Thus, ecumenical dialogue is a dialogue between churches that seeks to more fully understand, explain, and appropriate the endless unfolding of the mystery of the Christ's Church through the mutual exchange of one another as symbol, which *really* are expressions that carry the reality of the church of Christ. Rahner and Fries explain:

In their [churches of the Reformation] Christian life style, their liturgy, their theology, and in their relationship to secular realities, these churches have also clearly produced Christian and ecclesiastical realities which have a concrete form and liveliness not found so easily in the Roman Catholic Church. Thus it must be admitted honestly and openly that, compared to these realities, the Roman Catholic church in fact exhibits deficiencies. At least, it pays tribute to the inescapably valid principle that nobody, in his particular (individual and collective) reality, can realize, all together and at once, everything that Christian grace and revelation has potentially given to both world and history.³⁹⁹

Hence, the exchange that occurs at the ecumenical dialogue's goal of mutual recognition is not an exchange of manageable commodities, it is instead the exchange of symbols that develop out of one another's narrative identity into a shared narrative identity. A

³⁹⁹ Ibid., 48.

complete narrative identity, at least in regards to the churches, implies an eschatological finality that is simply not the case for any particular church.

Thesis III maintains that , “[i]n this one Church of Jesus Christ, composed of the uniting churches, there are regional partner churches which can, to a large extent, maintain their existing structures.”⁴⁰⁰ Rahner and Fries acknowledge that the unification of the churches does not require uniformity of structure. Accordingly, it is possible for a diversity of practices and structures to exist within the one church of Christ. Rahner writes:

The ecclesiological principle of a legitimate pluralism of discipline and life in the individual partner churches can and should be applied not only to the Eastern Churches... but also to the churches of the reformation.⁴⁰¹

Thesis III gains traction and reasonability in light of a logic that is governed by symbol rather than metaphysical ontology. Approached from the perspective of metaphysical ontology, unity of the churches in terms of discipline and structure remains on the level of primary reflection and as such requires a definitive resolution through compromise or assimilation. However, Rahner and Fries use an approach that respects the structures and disciplines of particular churches as ways in which churches express the one church of Christ in and through a diversity of contexts and traditions. Thesis III also expresses a relationality greater than mere tolerance. As partner churches, churches that occupy the same “territory” present not only a quantitative unity, but a qualitative unity.

Rahner and Fries address the role of the bishop Rome in two ways. Firstly, Rahner and Fries address the role of the bishop of Rome as an instrument of unity for the churches. Fries and Rahner write, “[a]ll partner Churches acknowledge the meaning and

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid., 43.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., 47.

right of the Petrine service of the Roman pope to be the concrete guarantor of the unity of the Church in truth and love.”⁴⁰² Secondly, Fries and Rahner take up the authoritative responsibilities of the bishop of Rome. Fries and Rahner put forth the sub-thesis that

The pope, for his part explicitly commits himself to acknowledge and to respect the thus agreed-upon independence of the partner churches. He declares (by human right, *iure humano*) that he will make use of his highest teaching authority (*ex cathedra*), granted to him in conformity with Catholic principles by the First Vatican Council, only in a manner that conforms judicially or in substance to a general council of the whole Church, just as his previous *ex cathedra* decisions have been issued in agreement and close contact with the whole Catholic episcopate.⁴⁰³

Hence, Fries and Rahner address the ecumenical place of the bishop of Rome in terms of the responsibilities of the churches and from the responsibilities of the bishop of Rome.

Chapter five will address some of the practical concerns that merit further reflection here, such as election, jurisdiction, and teaching authority including the significance of the proposal that the pope will make use of his highest teaching authority *de iure humano* and not *de iure divino*. The goal of this brief analysis is to situate the symbolic role of the bishop of Rome as an aspect of a unified church. Rahner and Fries contend that the polemical hermeneutic previously applied to Petrine service need not be the case any longer and that the contemporary ecumenical context calls for a revaluation of Petrine service. Harold Ditmanson writes, “Church polity is intended to serve the process of mediating the grace of God.”⁴⁰⁴ Hence, there is a need for the polity within the church, but according to Ditmanson, “the variety and changeability of church orders points to the continual need to express in updated form the relation between what is

⁴⁰² Ibid., 59.

⁴⁰³ Ibid., 83.

⁴⁰⁴ Ditmanson, “A Response to the Fries-Rahner Proposal for Church Unity,” 382.

normative and what is situational in the life of the church.”⁴⁰⁵ Ditmanson astutely acknowledges the ecumenical tension that surrounds the bishop of Rome and the need to understand the role of Petrine service in relationship to both orthodoxy and orthopraxis. A logic governed by symbol permits such a relationship. Envisioned from the standpoint of churches, a symbolic interpretation of Petrine service sees the bishop of Rome as a visible expression of the churches’ unity. However, this necessitates that the bishop of Rome, recognizing himself as a visible sign of unity, does not offend the visible expression of unity and respects the differences of particular churches, especially with respect to *ex cathedra* pronouncements.

Thesis V addresses the necessity of bishops as an expression of the unity of particular churches and as an expression of unity between churches. Fries and Rahner write:

All partner churches, in accordance with the ancient tradition, have bishops at the head of their larger subdivisions. The election of a bishop in these partner churches need not be done according to the normally valid manner in the Roman Catholic Church.⁴⁰⁶

Rahner and Fries affirm the significance of bishops for all churches. Rahner explored the status and function of the bishop in an earlier work where he writes, “[t]he Church alone, in fact, in contrast to all other societies, has this unique characteristic that she can appear as a microcosm of herself in any one place.”⁴⁰⁷ In terms familiar to Rahner’s transcendental theology, the “transcendental” and “particular” churches are expressions that make the same reality present; Jesus Christ.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., 382-383.

⁴⁰⁶ Fries and Rahner, *Unity of the Churches: An Actual Possibility*, 93.

⁴⁰⁷ Karl Rahner, *Bishops: Their Status and Function* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1965), 37-38.

In a particular way, bishops are symbols of the apostolicity of the church. Fries writes that “the apostolic succession in the office of the bishop is a *sign* of the apostolicity of the church, not apostolicity itself.”⁴⁰⁸

Thesis VI states that, “The partner churches live in mutual fraternal exchange of all aspects of their life, so that the previous history and experience of the churches separated earlier can become effective in the life of the other partner churches.”⁴⁰⁹ Thesis VI explicitly deals with mutuality. Accordingly, an ecumenically united church is not a church offended by difference, nor is it a church that seeks to unite through conformity. Instead, a united church is a church that responds to the need for a second naïveté whereby the individual churches more fully realize and express their life in and through the exchange of difference. Fries writes:

This thesis corresponds to the perceived goal of the one Church-to-be, which is to be understood not as a Church of uniformity, but rather as a unity in variety, as a conciliar fellowship, as Church of reconciled diversity. The precondition for such a goal is the mutual recognition which itself presupposes mutuality and diversity.⁴¹⁰

In short, the exchange of symbols governs mutuality in a manner whereby churches develop in relationship to one another and not in spite of one another. The challenges that inevitably arise in the face of diversity and difference are not so much affronts against Christian identity as they are the milieu for a more fully expressed and realized Christian identity.

Thesis VII of the Fries-Rahner proposal for the unity of the church takes up the issue of recognition of offices between churches. Fries and Rahner propose that:

Without prejudice to the judgment of another church concerning the theological

⁴⁰⁸ Fries and Rahner, *Unity of the Churches: An Actual Possibility*, 99.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 107.

legitimacy of the existing ministerial office in the separated churches, all partner churches commit themselves henceforth to conduct ordinations with prayer and the laying-on of hands, so that acknowledging them will present no difficulty for the Roman Catholic partner church either.⁴¹¹

The recognition of ministerial office is a two-fold issue. Firstly, it is a matter of recognizing the ministries of still separated churches. Secondly, it is a matter of recognizing the jurisdiction of the ministers of other churches. Fries and Rahner suggest that with respect to the Roman Catholic understandings of the validity of orders and the subsequent validity of the Eucharist that it would be necessary to establish common practices, i.e. the laying on of hands and prayer, in order to recognize mutually both the ministers and the Eucharist.

Of all the theses presented by Rahner and Fries, Thesis VII is decidedly in favor of a Catholic position. In other words, both Rahner and Fries understand the necessity of the laying on of hands and prayer as essential for dealing with the impasse between Catholic sacramental theology and Protestant sacramental theology, especially in regards to the requirements of sacramental validity. However, Rahner gestures towards a more nuanced position when he writes:

Ordinations are ultimately valid not because it is absolutely certain that, even in exceptional cases, they have corresponded to the concept of an almost physical norm of effectiveness of the sacraments... They are valid because they are deemed valid within the one Church, and because they must be acknowledged as valid in a variety of situations.⁴¹²

The above affirms the symbolic quality and effectiveness of ordination and the sacraments as arising from the mutual recognition of a community. In a certain sense, it is the mutual recognition of the church community that validates the ordination in and through the prayer and the laying on of hands.

⁴¹¹ Ibid., 115.

⁴¹² Ibid., 120-121.

The final thesis proposed by Rahner and Fries contends that, “[t]here is pulpit and altar fellowship between the individual partner churches.”⁴¹³ Here mutuality, at least as far as ecumenical dialogue is concerned, reaches its goal. Fries explains:

For the unity of the faith and of the Church is not monolithic, static, or conceivable as definitely completed. It is open-ended and, as enduring and living unity, is marked by the incomplete, the “in transit,” and by eschatological reservation. One can also describe this ecclesiological state of affairs by defining the reality of the Church as gift *and* task; unity appearing in the Eucharist can be understood as unity antecedently given through Jesus Christ, which becomes the constant and endless task for the community of those bound to Christ; it can be understood as striving for unity (see Eph. 4:13) and endeavors toward unification and reconciliation.⁴¹⁴

Rahner and Fries maintain that, properly understood, mutual recognition does not entail inter-communion, but rather prepares the way for altar fellowship as “mutual Eucharistic hospitality.”⁴¹⁵ One does not build mutual Eucharistic hospitality upon a foundation of sameness; instead, it is formed out of a recognition of mutuality that develops out of gratitude.

Mutual recognition between churches implies risk. As an exchange of symbols, mutual recognition gives rise to thinking that is often foreign to the status quo of a particular church. Recalling that symbols not only call for interpretation, but also have the power to interpret, churches find themselves both vulnerable and answerable to one another. The boldness of Fries and Rahner’s proposal lies within its insistence upon the courage to take risks (at least from the perspective of a metaphysical ontology) in a way that opens up otherwise closed possibilities and paths towards mutual recognition and unity. Mutuality and unity do not entail the absence of struggle, disagreement, or tension. Rahner explains:

⁴¹³ Ibid., 123.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., 132.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid., 136.

But it is precisely when we do find the courage to accept these conflicts and tensions within the Church, this real multiplicity of gifts and charisms, of tasks and functions, that we draw the sting from the struggle between opposing tendencies which always and inevitably do occur even within the Church, that we transform that struggle into the strivings of love, and that we set the Spirit free, who would otherwise be stifled.⁴¹⁶

4. - Conclusion

A logic that is governed by symbol invites a reimagining of the church, ecumenism, and ecumenical dialogue beyond the traditional Western logic's principles of metaphysical ontology. Simply put, a logic governed by symbol uncovers and is nourished by the relationship between unity and difference. As such, an understanding of the mystery of the other emerges in such a way that it can be interpreted and appropriated without managing it. The long path of recognition, with all of its detours, explicates both the overwhelming task of ecumenical dialogue and the possibility of achieving its goal of mutuality between still separated churches.

Drawing upon the theological resources of Karl Rahner's theology, the preceding analysis developed a symbolic approach to ecumenism and ecumenical dialogue. This symbolic approach offers a contemporary response to the challenge set forth by Vatican II in *Unitatis Redintegratio* (The Decree on Ecumenism):

There can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without interior conversion. For it is from newness of attitudes of mind, from self-denial and unstinted love, that desires of unity take their rise and develop in a mature way. We should therefore pray to the Holy Spirit for the grace to be genuinely self-denying, humble, gentle in the service of others and to have an attitude of generosity toward them.⁴¹⁷

The considerations of ecumenism and ecumenical dialogue in this chapter are admittedly the product of theological and philosophical reflection largely devoid of practical

⁴¹⁶ Karl Rahner, "Do Not Stifle the Spirit," in *Further Theology of the Spiritual Life 1*, Theological Investigations (New York: Seabury, 1971), 84-85.

⁴¹⁷ Second Vatican Council, §2 ¶7.

application. However, this is a necessary step in order to apply such a theology to the concrete reality of the ecumenical relationship between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANGLICAN-ROMAN CATHOLIC DIALOGUE: SOCIAL, HISTORICAL, AND THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. – Introduction

The relationship between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church has a complexity that is unique within the context of ecumenism. Moments of intense convergence and divergence mark the long and varied relationship between the two communions. The ebb and flow of the ecumenical relationship enjoyed by the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church is fraught with triumph and tragedy, mutual admiration and disdain, goodwill and bloodshed, politics and faith, open-mindedness and stubborn refusal, radical hope and sober realism. It is a relationship that is as complex as the personalities and communities it involves.

The modest goal of this chapter is to develop a narrative that cultivates an understanding of the significant historical and theological contours of the relationship between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church. The following is not, nor does it intend to be, an exhaustive account of the historical and theological developments between these two communions.⁴¹⁸ Instead, this chapter considers six “moments” within the relationship between the Anglican Communion and the Roman

⁴¹⁸ For an in-depth historical examination of the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion see: John R. H. Moorman, *A History of the Church in England*, 3rd ed. (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Pub., 1994); Bernard C. Pawley and Margaret Pawley, *Rome and Canterbury, through Four Centuries; a Study of the Relations between the Church of Rome and the Anglican Churches, 1530-1973* (New York,: Seabury Press, 1975); Stephen Sykes, John E. Booty, and Jonathan Knight, *The Study of Anglicanism* ([London]: SPCK/Fortress Press, 1998); Mary Reath, *Rome & Canterbury : The Elusive Search for Unity* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007); Stephen E. Cavanaugh, *Anglicans and the Roman Catholic Church : Reflections on Recent Developments* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011).

Catholic Church that are reflective of a larger narrative. These moments include the 1) The English Reformation and the *Via Media*, 2) the promulgation of Leo XIII's apostolic bull *Apostolicae Curae*, 3) the Malines Conversations from 1921 to 1927, 4) Vatican II and the *Malta Report*, 5) the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC), and finally 6) the promulgation of the apostolic constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus* by Benedict XVI on November 4, 2009.

2. – The English Reformation and the *Via Media*

The period beginning with the reign of Henry VIII and ending with Elizabeth I (1509-1603) represents a significant moment within the relationship between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church. Despite the obvious external divisions that arose in Western Christianity during the 16th century, it was also a formative moment for the internal development of the Western churches. The rapid developments of the 16th century Reformation provided the context for both the Roman Catholic “Counter-Reformation” and the English Reformation. For its part, however, the English reformation does not neatly fit into the categories of “Reformation” or “Counter-Reformation.” This section elucidates the origins of the breach between Rome and Canterbury and the genesis of the Anglican quest for “comprehensiveness.”

2.1 – Henry VIII and the Act of Supremacy

The marital relationships of Henry VIII sowed the seeds of the English reformation. Of Henry's six wives, his first wife, Catherine of Aragon (of Roman Catholic allegiance) and his subsequent wife Anne Boleyn (of Protestant allegiance) occupy a central place within the historical development of the Anglican Reformation.

Arthur, Henry VIII's brother, and Catherine of Aragon were married in 1501. However, Arthur died in 1502 and Henry, all of 12 years old, was engaged to Catherine in 1503. It was necessary, however, that a dispensation from affinity be granted by Pope Julius II before the marriage between Henry and Catherine could be recognized as a canonically valid.⁴¹⁹ Pope Julius II granted a bull of dispensation from affinity in 1504, allowing Henry and Catherine to marry in 1509 shortly after Henry's ascent to the throne as king of England. During more than eighteen years of marriage, Catherine gave birth to six children, all whom were stillborn with the exception of their daughter, Mary.

In 1527, Henry sought to have his marriage with Catherine annulled. Henry's desire for an annulment is complicated. Essentially, it rested upon his aspiration for a legitimate male heir and his wish to marry Anne Boleyn. Canonically speaking, the justification for annulment that Henry and his entourage of theological experts and political advisors put forth was, at best, convoluted. Henry argued that the original dispensation from "affinity" was outside of the competence of a pope's juridical authority. Henry petitioned the current pope, Clement VII, to overturn the 1504 dispensation that had been granted by Julius II in order to provide the canonical justification to annul his marriage with Catherine. However, as D.G. Newcombe recognizes, "[p]opes were never eager to admit that they had made mistakes, nor were they happy to overturn decisions of their predecessors."⁴²⁰ The reluctance of the pope to overturn the papal bull of Julius II, coupled with a tenuous political situation between

⁴¹⁹ Henry and Catherine would have been understood as related through affinity with respect to Catherine's previous and short-lived marriage to Henry's older brother, Arthur. "Affinity was a relationship which was thought to be established by sexual intercourse." D. G. Newcombe, *Henry VIII and the English Reformation* (London: Routledge, 1995), 24.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

Clement VII and Charles V, the king of Spain and Catherine's nephew, further complicated the possibility of obtaining an annulment.

Henry's boldness in his dealings with the pope grew in proportion to his impatience for obtaining an annulment. Henry attempted to force the hand of the pope through legislation and reforms enacted by the English Parliament, gradually increasing Henry's juridical authority over the Church of England while lessening the pope's. In September of 1533, Clement VII excommunicated Henry after his refusal to reconsider the *Act in Restraint of Appeals* that solidified the juridical authority of the monarchy with respect to the Church of England. This effectively rendered papal authority irrelevant within the English realm. Henry's brashness culminated with the 1534 *Act of Supremacy*, which states that the king:

shall be taken, accepted, and reputed the only Supreme Head in earth of the Church of England, called *Anglicana Ecclesia*, and shall have and enjoy, annexed and united to the imperial crown of this realm as well the style title thereof, as all honours, dignities, pre-eminences, jurisdictions, authorities, immunities, profits, and commodities, to the said dignity of Supreme Head of the same Church belonging and appertaining.⁴²¹

It is evident that Henry's disputes with Rome and the pope were juridical in nature. However, it is equally evident that Henry did not intend to create a breach within the church of Christ. While Henry was eager to establish some semblance of juridical independence from Rome, he did not envision nor intend for the Church of England to further the efforts of the continental Protestant Reformation.⁴²² However, the juridical disputes between Rome and England under the reign of Henry provided the context for

⁴²¹ Henry VIII, "Act of Supremacy 1534," in *Documents of the English Reformation*, ed. Gerald Lewis Bray (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 114.

⁴²² Pawley and Pawley, *Rome and Canterbury, through Four Centuries; a Study of the Relations between the Church of Rome and the Anglican Churches, 1530-1973*, 7.

both the development of the unique identity of the Church of England and for a continued hardening of its relationship with Rome.

2.2 – Anglican Identity: *The Via Media*

The term *via media*, or the middle way, is a term that has become characteristic of Anglican identity. Bernard and Margret Pawley observe that the term *via media* can be misleading. They write, “[t]he Anglican interpretation of catholicity has been a positive deliberate attempt towards comprehensiveness; to include and to make available as much Christian truth and order as was edifying.”⁴²³

In the wake of Henry VIII’s death in 1547, his son Edward VI, the heir apparent to English crown, was crowned king at the age of nine. It was the council of regency, in light of Edward’s age, that effectively governed England during the Edward VI’s reign. The extensive juridical authority of the State over the Church that Henry established paved the way for the Reformation-minded initiatives of Edward Seymour, the Duke of Somerset and Edward’s uncle, and Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury. John Moorman characterizes the religious context at the time of Edward’s accession to the throne:

Religious opinion in the country was at the time divided. Few had any hopes of a return to Rome, but there was much controversy over such matters as Justification by Faith, the meaning of the Mass..., images and relics, the infallibility of the Bible, and so forth. Somerset held advanced opinions, in many of which he was ably supported by Cranmer whose mind was increasingly influenced by foreign protestant theology. These two regarded the king’s minority as a good opportunity for introducing considerable religious changes, using the extensive powers which Henry VIII had usurped for the crown.⁴²⁴

The Edwardian rule introduced liturgical and ecclesial reforms heavily influenced by Protestant ideals. Under Edward’s reign, the English Church saw the development of the

⁴²³ Ibid., 15.

⁴²⁴ Moorman, *A History of the Church in England*, 180-181.

Book of Common Prayer, the Ordinal of 1549, reception of communion under both forms, married clergy, and the election of bishops, to name only a few reforms.⁴²⁵

Upon Edward's death in 1553 and in the absence of a male heir, the inheritance of the throne moved to Henry and Catherine's daughter, Mary. Upon her ascent to the throne, Mary moved quickly to undo the Protestant-minded reforms of the previous six years and was eager to restore communion with Rome. Mary's reign as Queen of England and her attempts at restoration, however, were both violent and unsuccessful, earning her the dubious designation "bloody Mary."

After the death of Mary I, her half-sister Elizabeth, the daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, ascended to the crown in 1558. In order to quell the religious upheaval and confusion that had plagued the Church of England, Elizabeth I put forth what is commonly termed the "Elizabethan Settlement." The settlement was comprised of two enactments, the *Act of Supremacy* of 1559, which restored the juridical reforms of Henry VIII, and the *Act of Uniformity* of 1559, which restored most of the Edwardian reforms. Together the enactments sought to develop a middle ground, or *via media*, between the "Catholic" and "Protestant" mindsets. It is with Elizabeth that the distinctiveness of the Anglican Church emerges. Bernard and Margaret Powley explain:

Her [The Church of England] distinctive position gradually began to take shape. The shape in which it emerged and which it has for the most part endured was more the result of practical experience than of basic doctrinal speculation. The Church of England, as has been said often, is not a confessional Church: she believes herself to be the result of what happened to the English portion of the catholic Church which broke off to restore and relive her basic faith and order in light of new experiences.⁴²⁶

⁴²⁵ See: Gerald Lewis Bray, *Documents of the English Reformation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 247-351.

⁴²⁶ Pawley and Pawley, *Rome and Canterbury, through Four Centuries; a Study of the Relations between the Church of Rome and the Anglican Churches, 1530-1973*, 15.

It is easier to understand the breach between the Anglican Church and Roman Catholic Church when the preceding historical considerations are placed against the backdrop of the Council of Trent (1545-1563). The Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church developed distinctive approaches for navigating unity when confronted with difference. The Roman Catholic Church responded to the perceived threat of the Reformation by solidifying its confessional and doctrinal positions in order to distinguish its identity from that of the reformers. At the risk of oversimplification, the Catholic Church at Trent favored an approach that began with theory and ended in praxis. The Anglican Church, however, dealt with unity and difference by way of the opposite approach. The Church of England began with praxis in order to develop and clarify its identity. Hence, it is not surprising, in light of the manner in which each church comes to understand its particular identity during these formative years, that the hopes of reconciliation and the breach between Rome and Canterbury are essentially solidified by the close of the sixteenth century.

3. – Leo XIII and *Apostolicae Curae*: The Validity of Anglican Orders

Pope Leo XIII's bull, *Apostolicae Curae*, is a significant moment in the dialogic relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England. The period between 1570 and the promulgation of the papal bull *Regnans in Excelesis*, which formally excommunicated Elizabeth I and those who obeyed her, and the promulgation of *Apostolicae Curae* in 1896 was marked by gradually increasing tolerance amidst deep-seated suspicion. This period in the relationship between the two communions is by no means without significance; however, realistically speaking there was little, if any, hope of unification between the churches of Rome and England.

There are three events leading up to *Apostolicae Curae* that are worth mentioning. The first is the establishment of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in England in the midst of the French revolution. The second is the “Oxford Movement,” which sought to correct some of the excesses that had become commonplace within the English Church. According to Bernard and Margaret Pawley, the movement was “responsible for substantial deepening in the understanding of the sacramental life.” The third notable event was the promulgation of papal infallibility in 1870 by Pius IX and the Vatican I Council. The Anglican Church interpreted infallibility as a new doctrine of the Catholic Church, reinforcing the view that the Roman Church and the papacy overstepped its jurisdiction. The unintended consequence of infallibility was the formation of the “Old Catholics,” a group which the Roman Catholic Church recognizes even today as having valid orders and whose bishops participate in the ordination of Anglican bishops.

Underlying the development of *Apostolicae Curae*, despite its unfavorable position regarding Anglican orders, are hopeful and friendly dialogues between Lord Halifax of England and Abbé Portal of France. Their friendship and ensuing dialogue convinced both men that the possibility of unifying Rome and Canterbury was a much more realistic possibility than was commonly held in both churches. Convinced that a frank and open dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England was both necessary and possible, Abbé Portal and Lord Halifax agreed that questions regarding Holy Orders would be a suitable starting point for such a dialogue. The result of this decision was a work crafted by Halifax and Portal, published in French under the pseudonym Fernand Dalbus and titled *Les Ordinations Anglicanes*. Leo XIII, as Portal recalls, received the work favorably.

The inquiry into Anglican orders, which for Halifax and Portal was an inquiry to initiate dialogue, impelled Leo XIII to set up a commission to examine the validity of Anglican orders.⁴²⁷ The commission, however, was overshadowed by the English Roman Catholic Church's desire for the unification of the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches by conquest and absorption. The resultant document, *Apostolicae Curae*, declared Anglican orders to be "utterly invalid and altogether void."⁴²⁸ The papal bull claims that beginning with the Ordinal of Edward VI, Anglican ordinations are defective according to intention and form. In regards to form, *Apostolicae Curae* states:

... In the rite of the accomplishment and administration of any sacrament we rightly distinguish between the ceremonial part and essential part, which are usually called the matter and the form. And all are aware that the sacraments of the new law, being sensible signs and signs efficacious of invisible grace, ought both to signify the grace which they effect and to effect the grace they signify.... Now the words which up to the last generation were universally held by Anglicans to be the proper form of ordination to the priesthood. viz. *Receive the Holy Ghost*, are surely far from the precise signification of the order of the priesthood, or its grace and power, which is especially the power of consecrating and offering the true body and blood of the Lord in that sacrifice which is no mere commemoration of the sacrifice accomplished on the cross. This form was indeed afterwards augmented by the words for the Office and work of a priest, but this rather proves that Anglicans saw that the first form was defective and inadequate.⁴²⁹

The Anglican rite of ordination, it was maintained, did not intend "the conferral of the power to offer sacrifice."⁴³⁰ In March of 1879, the archbishops of the English Church refuted the allegations of the Catholic Church that the ordination ritual of Edward VI lacked both intention and form.

⁴²⁷ Ibid., 250.

⁴²⁸ Leo XIII, "Apostolicae Curae," in *Documents of the Christian Church*, ed. Henry Scowcroft Bettenson and Chris Maunder (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 278.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ Richard P. McBrien and Harold W. Attridge, *The Harpercollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, 1st ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1995). s.v., *Apostolicae Curae*.

What began as a moment of convergence fueled by the desire for reunion and reconciliation degenerated into a moment of external divergence. *Apostolicae Curae* is a prime example of Rome and Canterbury trying to achieve too much too soon. Bernard and Margaret Pawley explain:

Looked back on from our days the mistakes of this episode can be seen to lead inevitably to disillusionment. The time was not ripe. There was no question that the Roman Curia could or would come to a conclusion acceptable to Anglicans. Even if it had, it is also certain, alas, that the large majority of Anglicans would not have felt moved to do anything about the opportunities so afforded, nor would any legislation consequent upon it have had the slightest chance of success.⁴³¹

Both Halifax and Portal, driven by their convictions, were, with respect to the benefit of history, ahead of their time. The bold and ambitious project of Lord Halifax and Abbé Portal, however, did not end with *Apostolicae Curae*. Instead, it drove the cause for union between Rome and Canterbury “underground,” only to resurface with what has become known as the *Malines Conversations*.

4. – The Malines Conversations: Dialogue Before Dialogue

The possibility of officially sanctioned dialogue between Rome and Canterbury was practically a non-issue after the promulgation of *Apostolicae Curae*. The naïve optimism of Lord Halifax and Abbé Portal, which resulted in Leo XIII’s declaration that Anglican orders were absolutely null and void, had the consequence of reinforcing polemical positions on both sides of the Tiber. From a Roman perspective, the Anglican Church was both heretical and schismatic; the only possible resolution was a submission and return to the Church of Rome, amounting to an “unconditional surrender” on the part of the Anglican Church. The Anglican Church, on the other hand, held similar convictions that the Roman Catholic Church betrayed its apostolic origins, ostracizing

⁴³¹ Pawley and Pawley, *Rome and Canterbury, through Four Centuries; a Study of the Relations between the Church of Rome and the Anglican Churches, 1530-1973*, 253.

churches in both the East and West. Anglican sensibilities fostered the conviction the Roman Church was both heretical and schismatic in so far as it had “invented” doctrines; the most recent being the *immaculate conception* and *papal infallibility*.

The dawn of the twentieth century witnessed the beginnings of the ecumenical movement and its formal inauguration at the World Missionary Conference of 1910 in Edinburgh. Rome and Canterbury’s diametrically opposed public and official responses to the growing ecumenical movement only further reinforced the perception that unity was not a possibility. However, the growing hope of a united Christendom was a reality not easily ignored by the Roman Catholic Church despite its official positions. The Roman Catholic Church was publically dismissive and hostile to all ecumenical efforts aside from Church unity through return to Rome. The Anglican Church, on the other hand, was a natural source of leadership for the fledgling ecumenical movement, both on account of its continuing development into a worldwide communion and its affinity for comprehensiveness. While publically and officially dismissive, the leadership within the Roman Catholic Church, including the pope, was, at times, *privately* amenable to ecumenical activities. Such is the case of Cardinal Mercier, Archbishop of Malines. Moved by the ecumenical character of the 1920 Lambeth Conference letter *To All Christian People*, Cardinal Mercier, at the behest of Lord Halifax and Abbé Portal, began a series of private conversations between Roman Catholics and Anglicans.⁴³² The discussions that took place in Malines between 1921 and 1926 “[d]octrinally... achieved

⁴³² Lambeth Conference 1920, “To All Christian People,” in *Documents of the Christian Church*, ed. Henry Scowcroft Bettenson and Chris Maunder (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 397-400.

little, except that the open exchange of views after so long was no doubt salutary.”⁴³³

The Malines conversations, despite all obstacles, gained the “quiet” formal acceptance of both the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Rome.

The first round of discussions took place from December 6 to December 8, 1921.

The small group consisted of three *informal* representatives from each church. R.J.

Lahey comments:

The first conversation was entirely unofficial. The archbishop of Canterbury had committed himself only to the extent of offering Halifax the letter of introduction and the dean of Wells a word of advice. Rome was even less implicated. In sponsoring the meetings Mercier was supported solely by his own position and prestige within the church and by the knowledge that the Pope raised no objection since hearing of his general intentions a year earlier.⁴³⁴

The first round of conversations accomplished very little by way of an agenda, but it solidified the participants’ convictions of the salutary nature of their endeavors. The group would not gather again until March of 1923.

Between the first and second meeting neither the Archbishop of Canterbury nor the Bishop of Rome were particularly interested in transparency regarding the Malines conversations. During the same period, Cardinal Mercier and Lord Halifax were consumed with Rome’s demand for secrecy in light of its public criticisms of the dangers of ecumenism. They were likewise consumed with the Archbishop of Canterbury’s reluctance to give his official consent in the absence of official support from Rome, despite his public affirmation and leadership within the ecumenical movement.

The second round of conversations took place in March of 1923. By this time, both the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury formally acknowledged the Malines

⁴³³ Pawley and Pawley, *Rome and Canterbury, through Four Centuries; a Study of the Relations between the Church of Rome and the Anglican Churches, 1530-1973*, 297.

⁴³⁴ R. J. Lahey, "Origins and Approval of the Malines Conversations," *Church History* 43, no. 3 (1974): 369.

conversations with the expectation that conversations remain secret. With a formal acknowledgment from both sides of the Tiber, it was now possible to move the conversations forward in an official, though limited capacity. Lahey comments, “[t]hey would have a mandate to discuss and to suggest – but not to negotiate, and in no way bind their respective communions.”⁴³⁵ The conversation of March 1923 focused on practical issues of union between Rome and Canterbury, such as the Roman hierarchy in England and Anglican worship. The emergence of the Anglican Communion (a term that first appeared in 1851) as a worldwide communion also presented considerable challenges. Thus, unity was no longer a matter of the restoring relations between the Church of England and the Church of Rome. The Anglican instruments of communion, which at that time consisted of the Lambeth conference and the Archbishop of Canterbury, were altogether different from those of the Roman Church. However, the fundamental issues that emerged during the course of the conversations revolved around the papacy. For instance, what was the relationship between the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Rome? One suggestion was that the Archbishop of Canterbury receive the pallium from the pope, thereby signifying the jurisdiction of, as well as obedience to, the pope. The Archbishop of Canterbury received this suggestion less than enthusiastically.⁴³⁶ In a correspondence to the Dean of Wells, an Anglican participant in the Malines conversations, Archbishop Davidson writes:

It is I think possible that our Roman Catholic friends, unfamiliar perhaps with the strength of opinion on these subjects which is prevalent in large sections of the English Church and people, may suppose us to be ready for a more accommodating acceptance of Roman Catholic contentions and claims than I for

⁴³⁵ Ibid., 384.

⁴³⁶ Pawley and Pawley, *Rome and Canterbury, through Four Centuries; a Study of the Relations between the Church of Rome and the Anglican Churches, 1530-1973*, 288-289.

one, can regard as being either possible or in accordance with our belief as to what is true.⁴³⁷

The conversations shed light on two glaring issues under the desire/effort of unification:

1) the papacy, and 2) doctrinal differences that often enough converged with the papacy.

These concerns directed the third round of conversations, which took place in November of 1923. The November conversation focused almost exclusively on the papacy.

The last, and arguably most interesting, round of conversations took place in May of 1925. During this meeting, Cardinal Mercier presented a memorandum titled *The Church of England United Not Absorbed*.⁴³⁸ The Roman Canonist, Lambert Beauduin, drew up the proposal for a possible path towards unification. Beauduin developed his proposal in a fashion similar to that of the Eastern Catholic churches that came into communion with Rome. Sonya Quitslund explains:

Since the pallium had been given by Gregory the Great to Augustine, the first Archbishop of Canterbury, in 597, as a sign of his effective jurisdiction over all the bishops, present and future of England, Beauduin developed the idea that perhaps there was in this instance something similar to the power of the Eastern Patriarchs. Pursuing this point, he arrived at the conclusion that the Anglican Church should be united to Rome but not absorbed by Rome, in much the same way as some Eastern Catholics had preserved a definite liturgical and disciplinary autonomy while yet being united to Rome.⁴³⁹

Despite its hopeful tone, both the Anglican and Roman communities met Beauduin's admittedly overly simplistic proposal with sharp criticism. Neither the Anglicans nor Roman Catholics were realistically and practically open to the idea of unity between the

⁴³⁷ Ibid., 289.

⁴³⁸ Lambert Beauduin, "The Church of England United Not Absorbed," in *From Malines to Arcic : The Malines Conversations Commemorated*, ed. Adelbert Denaux and John A. Dick (Leuven: University Press, 1997).

⁴³⁹ Sonya A. Quitslund, "'United Not Absorbed,' Does It Still Make Sense," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 8, no. 2 (1971): 268.

two communions. The death of Cardinal Mercier on January 23, 1926 effectively ended the work of Malines conversations.

Despite no concrete steps being taken towards unification, the Malines conversations were far from a failure. These conversations represent a moment in the relationship between the Anglican Communion and Roman Catholic Church during which the apparently “unthinkable” became a reality. The issues that surfaced during the course of these conversations (Roman centralization, Anglican Orders, unity and diversity, etc.) provided the groundwork and paved the way for future dialogues between Rome and Canterbury. As Edward Echlin observes the “seeds were planted at Malines which would germinate for forty years until, at Vatican II, the Church of Rome professed openness to unity in diversity.”⁴⁴⁰

5. Vatican II and the Malta Report

Vatican II introduced a significant shift in the Roman Catholic Church’s disposition towards ecumenism. It would be a mistake to interpret the pontificates of Pius XI and Pius XII leading up to the council as all together devoid of progress. However, the ecclesiological and theological mindsets characteristic of both pontificates left little room for ecumenical progress. During the period between the final conversation at Malines in 1925 and Vatican II (1962-1965) the official theological positions of the Roman Catholic Church were deeply entrenched in the thought and attitudes of Neo-Scholasticism. The Roman Catholic Church maintained it alone could be identified with the church of Christ. From this understanding the Roman Catholic Church was *the* perfect society. As such the Roman Catholic Church lacked nothing and all others

⁴⁴⁰ Edward P. Echlin, "Unity without Absorption," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 9, no. 1 (1972): 60.

societies, whether secular or religious, were wanting. Pius XI and Pius XII held firm to such convictions and expressed these principles in several of their respective encyclicals.⁴⁴¹

In particular, Pius XI's encyclical on religious unity, *Mortalium Animos*, forbade Roman Catholic participation in ecumenical activities. Pius XI wrote:

for the union of Christians can only be promoted by promoting the return to the one true Church of Christ of those who are separated from it, for in the past they have unhappily left it. To the one true Church of Christ, we say, which is visible to all, and which is to remain, according to the will of its Author, exactly the same as He instituted it.⁴⁴²

Pius XII, however, acknowledging that the church of Christ is not simply a juridical reality, recognized the spiritual nature of the church as the mystical body of Christ. In the encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi*, Pius XII contends that membership in the church of Christ was secured through baptism, profession of the one faith, and communion with the Bishop of Rome.⁴⁴³

5.1 – The Ecumenical Project of Vatican II

Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli was elected Pope on October 28, 1958 and took the name John XXIII. Less than three months after his election, on January 25, 1959, John XXIII announced his intention to convene an ecumenical council. The announcement, which elicited “stunned silence” from the Cardinals, underscores John XXIII's ecumenical ambitions. John XXIII writes of his hopes for the council:

the enlightenment, edification, and joy of the entire Christian people and a renewed cordial invitation to the faithful of the separated Churches to participate

⁴⁴¹ For a brief and concise survey of the pontificates of Pius XI and Pius XII as they relate to Vatican II see: John W. O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 80-92.

⁴⁴² Pius XI, "Mortalium Animos," (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1928), ¶ 10.

⁴⁴³ Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1943).

with us in this feast of grace and brotherhood, for which so many souls long in all parts of the world.⁴⁴⁴

As John O'Malley observes, John XXIII's announcement was remarkable for two reasons. In the first instance, John XXIII's tone was positive, not reactionary. Secondly, "John's stated aims quite directly extended a hand in friendship to other Christian churches."⁴⁴⁵

The ecumenical project of Vatican II and its implications for its relationship to the Anglican Communion are most clearly explicated in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, and the Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, both of which Paul VI promulgated on November 21, 1964. *Lumen Gentium* characterizes an attitudinal shift in the Roman Catholic Church's relationship to the church of Christ. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, for its part, clarifies the shift in emphasis of *Lumen Gentium* and acknowledges degrees of communion, with a "special place" for the Anglican Communion.

Joseph Komonchak observes that beyond a definition of "what" the church is, *Lumen Gentium* addresses the question, "where is the church?"⁴⁴⁶ According to Komonchak, *Lumen Gentium* addresses this question three ways. Firstly, the council fathers move away from a language of *membership* towards a language that centers on

⁴⁴⁴ G. Alberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak, *History of Vatican II Vol. I, Announcing and Preparing Vatican Council II toward a New Era in Catholicism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995), 15. Alberigo notes that the official edition of John XXIII's speech was both "polished" and "blunted." The official edition replaced "churches" with "communities", "participate" with "follow", and "feast" with "search."

⁴⁴⁵ O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 17-18.

⁴⁴⁶ Joseph A. Komonchak, "The Significance of Vatican II for Ecclesiology," in *The Gift of the Church : A Textbook Ecclesiology in Honor of Patrick Granfield, O.S.B.*, ed. Patrick Granfield and Peter C. Phan (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2000), 77-83.

communion. According to *Lumen Gentium*, full incorporation into the society church consists of:

those who, possessing the Spirit of Christ, accept its entire structure and all the means of salvation established within it and who in its visible structure are united with Christ, who rules it through the Supreme Pontiff and the bishops, by the bonds of profession of faith, the sacraments, ecclesiastical government, and communion. A person who does persevere in charity, however, is not saved even though incorporated into the Church.⁴⁴⁷

Full incorporation, according to the council fathers, is only a reality for Catholics.

However, the council also acknowledges that a lack of fullness does not entail utter absence. The council maintains that other churches enjoy a real, but imperfect communion. Despite the present context of separation, churches are still bound to one another in various ways.

Secondly, Komonchak maintains that the council fathers are uncomfortable with an exclusive identification of the church of Christ with the Roman Catholic Church. The use of the term “subsists” is indicative of this discomfort. According to the council:

This is the unique church of Christ which in the Creed we profess to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic which our Saviour, after his resurrection, entrusted to Peter’s pastoral care (Jn 21: 17), commissioning him and the other apostles to extend and rule it (see Mt 28: 18, etc.), and which he raised up for all ages as the pillar and mainstay of the truth (see 1 Tim 3: 15). This church, constituted and organized as a society in the present world, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him. Nevertheless, many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside its visible confines. Since these are gifts belonging to the church of Christ, they are forces impelling towards catholic unity.⁴⁴⁸

The council recognizes that the church of Christ extends beyond the visible boundaries of the Roman Catholic Church. In short, the church is found wherever the truth of salvation is a manifest. The council fathers understand that the Roman Catholic Church expresses

⁴⁴⁷ Vatican II, “Lumen Gentium,” in *Vatican Council II: The Basic Sixteen Documents : Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*, ed. Austin Flannery (Northport, NY, Costello, 1996), ¶ 14.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, ¶ 8.

the fullness of salvation; however, institutionally it is not the only expression of salvation.

Finally, Komonchak acknowledges that the council affirms the presence of the church of Christ in the worshipping community gathered around the Eucharistic table.⁴⁴⁹ The Eucharistic assembly is *the* expression of the one church in its particular locality. Thus, the council acknowledges that the universal or catholic church is manifested locally through word and sacrament. In short, the catholicity of the church is embodied and expressed in local communities. As such, local communities are not simply administrative subsections of the church. They *really* are church.

Unitatis Redintegratio clarifies the shift in ecclesiological and ecumenical emphases of *Lumen Gentium*. Despite all that separates Christians from one another, the Decree on Ecumenism states in clear and certain terms that:

... It remains true that all who have been justified by faith in Baptism are incorporated into Christ; they therefore have the right to be called Christians, and with good reason are accepted as brothers and sisters in the Lord by the children of Catholic Church.⁴⁵⁰

Hence, all Christians share in the communion that is salvation. The council maintains that “some, even very many, of the most significant elements and endowments which together go to build up and give life to the church itself, can exist outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church.”⁴⁵¹ While the council upholds that churches separated from Rome suffer from a variety of imperfections, it nevertheless acknowledges “the Spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them [separated

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., ¶ 26.

⁴⁵⁰ Vatican II, "Unitatis Redintegratio," ¶3.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

churches] as a means of salvation which derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church.”⁴⁵²

It would be an inaccurate to interpret the remarkable ecumenical and ecclesiological shifts that occurred at Vatican II as a macro-rupture with the Roman Catholic understanding of its own identity. Instead, with Vatican II the Roman Catholic Church remarkably began to understand its identity *in relation to* other churches. This “*in relation to*” is not a tension that the council itself resolves, nor did it intend to do so. While the council acknowledges that the communion of the church is a communion characteristic of unity-in-difference, it does not go so far as to establish the limits of unity and difference. Pope Paul VI explains, “[t]he council aims at complete and universal ecumenicity. That is at least what it desires, what it prays and prepares for. Today it does so in hope that tomorrow it may see the reality.”⁴⁵³

The relationship between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church appears only once in the sixteen documents produced by the council. The reference itself is vague and deserves consideration. After acknowledging the “Great Schism” and the division between Eastern and Western churches, the Decree on Ecumenism states:

⁴⁵² Ibid. The distinction between churches and ecclesial communities found in the documents of Vatican II are not as precise as those subsequently found in *Dominus Iesus*. *Dominus Iesus* affirms that a church is constituted by apostolic succession via the valid ordination of a bishop and subsequently by the valid celebration of the Eucharist by a validly ordained priest or bishop. A. Amato et al., *Declaration Dominus Iesus: Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith* (Washington D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2012), ¶ 17. However, the council fathers were less concerned with identifying the criteria for the distinction between churches and ecclesial communities as more concerned with acknowledging the reality that not all Christian communities identify with the label “church.” See: George H. Tavard, *Vatican II and the Ecumenical Way* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2007), 46-47.

⁴⁵³ Paul VI, “The Task,” in *Council speeches of Vatican II*, eds. Hans Küng; Yves Congar; Daniel O’Hanlon (Rome: Paulist Press), 145.

Still other divisions arose in the West more than four centuries later. These stemmed from the events which are commonly referred to as the Reformation. As a result, many communions, national or confessional, were separated from the Roman See. Among those in which catholic traditions and institutions in part continue to exist, the Anglican Communion occupies a special place.⁴⁵⁴

The council does not clarify this “special place” that the Anglican Communion occupies.

George Tavard maintains that a longer description would have caused surprise to other Churches such as the Old Catholics and Lutherans.⁴⁵⁵ Despite its ambiguity, the context of the statement is telling. The divisions that exist between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church are unique. In other words, properly understood the English reformation and the subsequent development of the Anglican Communion do not fit neatly into categories of Orthodox or Protestant. Whatever may have been the exact reason for according the Anglican Communion a “special place” within the divided churches of the West, the “special place” was clarified after the council by the ensuing dialogues between Rome and Canterbury.

5.2 – The Malta Report

On December 8, 1965, the Second Vatican Council formally concluded. Shortly thereafter, in March 1966, Paul VI received the Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey, in Rome. The result of the meeting was the first in a series of Common Declarations between the Bishop of Rome and the Archbishop of Canterbury. The Common Declaration of March 1966 officially set in motion dialogue between the two communions:

They [Paul VI and Archbishop Ramsey] affirm their desire that all those Christians who belong to these two communions may be animated by these same sentiments of respect, esteem and fraternal love, and in order to help these develop to the full, they intend to inaugurate between the Roman Catholic Church

⁴⁵⁴ Vatican II, "Unitatis Redintegratio," ¶ 13.

⁴⁵⁵ Tavard, *Vatican II and the Ecumenical Way*, 47-48.

and the Anglican Communion a serious dialogue which, founded upon the Gospels and on the ancient common traditions, may lead to that unity in truth, for which Christ prayed.⁴⁵⁶

In response to the common declaration of March 1966, a joint preparatory commission was established in order to research and recommend areas of convergence and divergence between Rome and Canterbury.

The results of the joint preparatory commission were presented to both Paul VI and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey, in January of 1968. The “Malta Report”, as it is commonly called, was far reaching in its ambitions and practical in its approach. The joint commission proposed that the communions would benefit from pursuing unity in stages. The Malta Report identifies three successive stages along the path to “full, organic unity.”⁴⁵⁷

The joint commission contended, “[d]ivergences... have arisen not so much from the substance of this inheritance [liturgy, theology, spirituality, Church order, and mission] as from our separate ways of receiving it.”⁴⁵⁸ Thus, from the perspective of the commission, the initial stage of unity between the Anglican Communion and Roman Catholic Church would be one of interpretation. The commission acknowledged that the necessity of a new language that was not bound to the controversies of the past in order to “distinguish between those differences which are merely apparent, and those which are

⁴⁵⁶ Paul VI and Michael Ramsey, “The Common Declaration, 1966,” in *Doing the Truth in Charity : Statements of Pope Paul VI, Popes John Paul I, John Paul II, and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, 1964-1980*, ed. Thomas F. Stransky and John B. Sheerin (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).

⁴⁵⁷ Malta Anglican-Roman Catholic Preparatory Commission, “The Malta Report, 1968,” in *Growth in Agreement : Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level*, ed. Harding Meyer and Lukas Vischer (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), ¶17.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, ¶4.

real and require serious examination.”⁴⁵⁹ The experience and documents of Vatican II provided room for Roman Catholics to interpret with the Anglican Communion. The commission saw in the documents of Vatican II the hermeneutic resources to foster, recognize, and develop convergence:

first, between the traditional Anglican distinction of internal and external communion and the distinction drawn by the Vatican Council between full and partial communion; secondly, between the Anglican distinction of fundamentals from non-fundamentals and the distinction implied by the Vatican Council’s references to a ‘hierarchy of truths’ (Decree on Ecumenism 11), to the difference between ‘revealed truths’ and ‘the manner in which they are formulated’ (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World 62), and to diversities in theological tradition being often ‘complementary rather than conflicting’ (Decree on Ecumenism 17).⁴⁶⁰

The second stage proposed by the joint commission would require “an official and explicit affirmation of mutual recognition from the highest authorities of each communion.”⁴⁶¹ This stage of unity, as the commission envisioned it, is characteristic of a unity-in-difference whereby mutual recognition does not entail absorption. Unity at this stage is characterized by mutual recognition expressed in and through a shared faith, regular consultation between church authorities, and collaboration in *diakoina*, *matryria*, and *leitourgia* when it is appropriate.

The final stage of unity, according to the joint commission, would be characteristic of unity that is both full and visible. However, unlike the first two stages, the commission acknowledged, “we cannot envisage in detail what may be the issues and demands of the final stage in our quest for the full, organic unity of our two communions.”⁴⁶²

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., ¶6.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., ¶7.

⁴⁶² Ibid., ¶17.

6. – The Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission

The Malta Report put forth the recommendation to establish a permanent joint commission. The Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England Council on Foreign Relations and the Anglican Executive Officer of the Church of England were charged with the oversight of the ecumenical relations between the Roman Catholics and Anglicans.⁴⁶³ The direct result of this recommendation was the formation of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC).

The dialogues of ARCIC are theologically and historically complex. The impetus for the ARCIC endeavor was born out of the convergence between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion plainly evident in the wake of Vatican II. ARCIC I (1970-1981) and ARCIC II (1983-2006), however, were conducted during a time of rapid development and change both within the communions themselves and within the world at large. The process of interpreting and appropriating these shifting paradigms revealed significant divergences between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church. Such divergences have hindered the process of formally and practically receiving the statements of the ARCIC dialogues. George Tavard explains:

...despite the closely related threefold structure of ministry found in these two traditions, notable differences of organization are not without effect on the way in which the *sensus fidelium* is shaped and the ultimate decisions are reached. The Anglican communion is in fact an association of sister churches united by a common liturgy and a common ethos, but each one with its independent decision-making system. Furthermore, these decision-making systems have largely been shaped by parliamentary model of government... Compared to this, the still largely centralized Catholic Church finds it difficult to endorse new doctrinal

⁴⁶³ Ibid., ¶21.

texts, except when such a decision is so obvious that it can be made from the top without any danger of being rejected at large.⁴⁶⁴

Two events are particularly significant for understanding the ARCIC dialogues and their subsequent reception. Firstly, one must consider the process of interpreting and appropriating the Second Vatican Council within the Roman Catholic Church. Secondly, the Anglican Communion's struggle to maintain unity amidst growing differences, especially with the ordination of women to the presbyterate and the ordination of women bishops, shaped the trajectory and reception of the ARCIC dialogues.

In both communions, the reception of the ARCIC dialogues requires a larger process of reception dependent on the exercise of authority. The intention of this section is to elucidate the historical and theological trajectory of the ARCIC dialogues and their subsequent reception.⁴⁶⁵ Hence, what follows is more or less confined to a descriptive analysis, leaving a more thorough theological exploration of the dialogues to chapter 5.

6.1 – ARCIC I

Between 1970 and 1981, ARCIC I developed four statements: *Eucharistic Doctrine* (1971), *Ministry and Ordination* (1973), *Authority in the Church I* (1976), and *Authority in the Church II* (1981). The commission produced a "Final Report" in 1981 that consists of the above statements, elucidations on *Eucharistic Doctrine*, *Ministry and Ordination*, and *Authority in the Church I* as well as a preface and an introduction. The statements of ARCIC I are characteristic of a progressive unfolding movement that is grounded in the Eucharist. George Tavard explains that ARCIC proceeds "from Eucharist, to ministry and ordination, and then to the authority in the church, leaving

⁴⁶⁴ George H. Tavard, "The Anglican-Roman Catholic Agreed Statements and Their Reception," *Theological Studies* 41, no. 1 (1980): 95.

⁴⁶⁵ See: Ormond Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II: Some Hermeneutical Principles* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2004), 69-85.

other, perhaps more practical questions of pastoral cooperation and sacramental sharing to a later time...”.⁴⁶⁶ Tavad provides two important principles for interpreting the statements of ARCIC I. Firstly, the statements of ARCIC I are grounded in and reflect a shared understanding of the Eucharist. Secondly, the statements of ARCIC I represent an unfolding progressive whole and ought to be interpreted as such. The statements of ARCIC I, however, are interpreted in light of practical issues, such as the ordination of women. Such an interpretation misplaces the ARCIC dialogues and statements within a context that they simply are not intended to address.

Minna Hietamäki articulates two hermeneutical foci for the ARCIC I statements. Hietamäki observes that within the unfolding development of ARCIC I, the themes 1) *koinonia* and 2) obedience and faithfulness to the lordship of Christ permeate the documents.⁴⁶⁷ The *Introduction* to the *Final Report* describes Christian *koinonia* as “[u]nion with God in Christ Jesus through the Holy Spirit” and that the *koinonia* between Christians “is entailed by our *koinonia* with God in Christ.”⁴⁶⁸ The *Final Report* attests to the centrality of the concept of *koinonia* as a hermeneutical focus. The *Final Report* states, “[t]he theme of *koinonia* runs through our Statements. In them we present the eucharist as the effectual sign of *koinonia*, *episcopate* as serving *koinonia*, and primacy as a visible link and focus of *koinonia*.”⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁶ Tavad, "The Anglican-Roman Catholic Agreed Statements and Their Reception," 77.

⁴⁶⁷ Minna Hietamäki, *Agreeable Agreement : An Examination of the Quest for Consensus in Ecumenical Dialogue*, Ecclesiological Investigations (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 93-94.

⁴⁶⁸ Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, "Final Report," in *Growth in Agreement : Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level*, ed. Harding Meyer and Lukas Vischer (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), 65.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid.

In regards to obedience and faithfulness to the lordship of Christ, *Authority in the Church I* states: “[t]he Church is a community which consciously seeks to submit to Jesus Christ.”⁴⁷⁰ The statements of ARCIC I understand faithfulness and obedience to Christ within a complex network of closely-knit and interdependent relationships bound together through the activities of service, worship, and witness. The Statement *Ministry and Ordination* explains:

The Christian community exists to give glory to God through the fulfillment of the Father’s purpose. All Christians are called to serve this purpose by their life of prayer and surrender to divine grace, and by their careful attention to the needs of all human beings. They should witness to God’s compassion for all mankind and his concern for justice in the affairs of men. They should offer themselves to God in praise and worship, and devote their energies to bringing men into the fellowship of Christ’s people; and so under his rule of love.⁴⁷¹

The entire church, whether ordained or lay, is called to obedience and faithfulness in particular and interdependent ways. Accordingly, the ARCIC I statements envision a connection between the expression of the concepts of *koinoinia* and obedience both internally and externally through the activities of *martyria*, *leitourgia*, and *diakonia*. Authority in the church originates in obedience to the salvific will of God, which is expressed through God’s Word, Jesus Christ. The entire church, in its life and mission, is called together to bring this visible expression. Internally, there is a diversity of callings and gifts within the church whereby all members of the church, whether ordained or not, are accountable to one another.⁴⁷² As the next section demonstrates, it is precisely the

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid., 91.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., 80.

⁴⁷² “The goal of the ordained ministry is to serve this priesthood of all the faithful. Like any human community, the Church requires a focus of leadership and unity, which the Holy Spirit provides in the ordained ministry. This ministry assumes various patterns to meet the varying needs of those whom the Church is seeking to serve, and it is the role of the minister to coordinate the activities of the Church’s fellowship and to promote what is necessary and useful for

issue of authority that is at the center of the reception of the achievements of the ARCIC

I.

6.1.1 – ARCIC I and Reception: Authority Issues

Rapid change and internal discernment mark the twelve years between the formation of the first ARCIC commission and its *Final Report* for both the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church. In particular, the emerging practice of ordaining women within some churches of the Anglican Communion and the post-conciliar implementation and appropriation of Vatican II for Roman Catholics are significant developments during this period of history. Both Vatican II and the ordination of women are “moments” that confront the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion respectively with practical concerns. As such, addressing these concerns necessitates recourse to authoritative structures. With respect to the development of the ordination of women in the Anglican Communion, authority was consolidated at the local level in order to resolve disagreements and to protect communion from fracture.⁴⁷³ The Anglican Communion viewed decentralization as a way to both respect diversity and preserve unity between its member churches. In the wake of Vatican II, however, the Roman Catholic Church experienced a gradual centralization. As divergent interpretations and theologies proliferated after the council, Roman centralization was seen as a way of reigning in suspected abuses and misinterpretations of the council.⁴⁷⁴ In

the Church’s life and mission. He is to discern what is of the Spirit in the diversity of the Church’s life and promote its unity.” Ibid., 80-81.

⁴⁷³ For a concise history of the development of the ordination of women in the Anglican Communion, see: Paul D. L. Avis, *The Identity of Anglicanism : Essentials of Anglican Ecclesiology* (London: T & T Clark, 2007), 118-151.

⁴⁷⁴ The Extraordinary Synod of 1985 provides six principles of interpretation for the texts of Vatican II. Avery Dulles distills these principles as follows: 1) “Each Passage and document of the council must be interpreted in the context of all the others, so that the integral meaning of

short, the pope and the magisterium of the Catholic Church gradually affirmed and positioned itself as *the* authentic interpreter(s) of the council. Both communions, confronted with maintaining unity amidst the reality of difference, found recourse for the exercise of authority within their respective traditions. The traditional value of comprehensiveness and decentralization was relied on by the Anglican Communion, while the Roman Catholic Church reaffirmed its conviction that “all roads lead to Rome.”

The authoritative structures that are affirmed and strengthened in the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion during the period of ARCIC I envision and implement the process of *reception* (or *non-reception*) in drastically different fashions in so far as reception is understood as fidelity to the what has already been received.⁴⁷⁵ Ormond Rush explains:

Reception includes judgments as to the value and importance of some elements over others; it involves selection, that is, decisions to explicitly retrieve and foreground a particular dimension of the tradition and to allow another dimension to recede into the background. In this way, reception involves determinations of continuity and discontinuity.⁴⁷⁶

In turn, recourse to centralization for Roman Catholics on the one hand and the Anglican recourse to decentralization on the other had a significant impact on the reception of ARCIC I. Matthieu Wagemaker explains:

the Council may be rightly grasped”; 2) “The four major constitutions of the Council are the hermeneutical key for the other decrees and declarations”; 3) “the pastoral import of the documents may not be separated from, or set in opposition to, their doctrinal content”; 4) “No opposition may be made between the spirit and the letter of Vatican II”; 5) “The council must be interpreted in continuity with the great tradition of the Church, including earlier councils”; 6) “Vatican II must be accepted as illuminating the problems of our own day.” Avery Robert Cardinal Dulles, “The Reception of Vatican II at the Extraordinary Synod of 1985,” in *Reception of Vatican II* (Washington, DC: Catholic Univ of America Pr, 1987), 350.

⁴⁷⁵ This is an important aspect of the present-day ecumenical relationship and is dealt with in greater detail in chapter five. However, it is significant to note at this earlier stage in the discussion that the authoritative structures of the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion are both ill-equipped to receive the work of ecumenical dialogues.

⁴⁷⁶ Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II: Some Hermeneutical Principles*, 3.

The ARCIC I *Final Report* is remarkable, because it achieved a substantial agreement on issues that constituted the main obstacles for a reunion of the Anglican Churches with the Catholic Church. ARCIC made the prospect of reunion something that seemed to be within the realm of the possible. What it did not do was to take into account the difference between theory and practice. The Catholic Church possesses the authority structure to implement what is agreed. Perhaps not every Catholic would agree with whatever decision is made, but the commitment once given would be a real one. The Anglican Communion is deprived of that structure. Member Churches must make their decisions on their own.⁴⁷⁷

The official response of the Anglican Communion was issued by the Lambeth Conference in 1988. The Anglican reception was generally positive; however, it was overshadowed by the issues of the women's ordination and concerns regarding women and the episcopate. There was clear agreement among the leadership of the member churches that the statements *Eucharistic Doctrine*, and *Ministry and Ordination* were both "consonant in substance with the faith of Anglicans."⁴⁷⁸ *Authority in the Church I* and *Authority in the Church II* was understood and welcomed as a "firm basis for the direction and agenda of the continuing dialogue."⁴⁷⁹ The statements, however, raised concerns about issues such as primacy, infallibility, and collegiality.

The official response given by the Roman Catholic Church was delivered by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) in 1991. Juxtaposed with the Anglican response, the official Catholic response is much less welcoming and much more critical of the *Final Report*. The 1991 response differs little in terms of its criticism from the initial observations on the *Final Report* published by the CDF in 1982. In addition, the

⁴⁷⁷ Matthieu Wagemaker, *Two Trains Running : The Reception of the Understanding of Authority by Arcic I Related to the Debates on the Ordination of Women*, European University Studies Series XXIII, Theology, (Bern: P. Lang, 1999), 20.

⁴⁷⁸ Lambeth Conference 1988, "The 1988 Lambeth Conference: Resolution 8 and Explanatory Note Regarding Arcic I," in *Anglicans and Roman Catholics: The Search for Unity*, ed. Christopher Hill and Edward Yarnold (London: SPCK / CTS, 1994), ¶1.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, ¶3.

1991 response neglects to account for the responses to the *Final Report* by the national conferences of Bishops. Francis Sullivan maintains that the critical response issued by the CDF was, to some extent, unwarranted and misleading.⁴⁸⁰ ARCIC I argued that “substantial agreement” existed on matters of ordination, ministry, and Eucharist.

ARCIC I understood “substantial agreement” to mean:

that the document represents not only the judgment of all its members but their unanimous agreement ‘on essential matters where it considers that doctrine admits no divergence’ it is a substantial agreement. Members of the Commission are united in their conviction ‘that if there are any remaining points of disagreement they can be resolved on the principles here established’.⁴⁸¹

Regarding issues of authority in the church, the commission only claimed “consensus” and at points only “convergence.”⁴⁸² The critical response issued by the CDF, however, “criticizes ARCIC I for not achieving results which the Commission itself did not claim to have achieved.”⁴⁸³ For instance, the CDF critiques ARCIC I for not having achieved *complete* agreement with Catholic doctrine. However, ARCIC I did not claim *complete* agreement in any of its statements. Sullivan maintains that according to the logic presented by the CDF’s response to the *Final Report*:

...to say that an agreed ecumenical statement is *consonant* with the faith of the Catholic Church, means that it must be identical with that faith. Further examination of the Response shows that an agreed statement will not be seen as identical with the Catholic *faith*, unless it corresponds fully with Catholic *doctrine*, and indeed with the official Catholic formulation of that doctrine. It must furthermore be expressed in such a way as to exclude all ambiguity; and the Vatican documents seems to know no way to exclude such ambiguity except to

⁴⁸⁰ Francis Sullivan, "Francis Sullivan: The Vatican Response to Arcic I (1992)," in *Anglicans and Roman Catholics : The Search for Unity*, ed. Christopher Hill and Edward Yarnold (London: SPCK / CTS, 1994).

⁴⁸¹ Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, "Final Report (1981)," 72.

⁴⁸² Hietamäki, *Agreeable Agreement : An Examination of the Quest for Consensus in Ecumenical Dialogue*, 94-97.

⁴⁸³ Sullivan, 301.

use the precise formulas by which the Catholic Church is accustomed to express its faith.⁴⁸⁴

Sullivan's assessment poignantly illustrates how the practice of centralization influenced the official mechanisms of reception within the Roman Catholic Church in two important ways. Firstly, the official response to *Final Report* evidences little collegial consultation with the bishops of the Roman Catholic Church. Hence, it is difficult to acknowledge that official response of the Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith (CDF) is a response shared by the Roman Catholic Church. Secondly, the response is characteristic of an epistemological centralization. The criticisms and concerns of the CDF demonstrate an attitude of agreement in terms of conformity.

6.2 – ARCIC II

The second phase of ARCIC was formally announced on May 29, 1982 in a common declaration between Robert Runcie, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and John Paul II, the bishop of Rome. Together they outlined the task of ARCIC II:

We are agreed that it is now time to set up a new international Commission. Its task will be to continue the work already begun: to examine, especially in the light of our respective judgments on the Final Report, the outstanding doctrinal differences which still separate us, with a view towards their eventual resolution; to study all that hinders the mutual recognition of the ministries of our Communion; and to recommend what practical steps will be necessary when, on the basis of our unity in faith, we are able to proceed to the restoration of full communion.⁴⁸⁵

As the above demonstrates, the task given to ARCIC II was two-fold. Firstly, the commission was charged with the task of building upon the work of ARCIC I and the official responses from both the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid., 303.

⁴⁸⁵ John Paul II and Robert Runcie, "Common Declaration 1982," in *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level, 1982-1998*, ed. Jeffrey Gros, Harding Meyer, and William G. Rusch (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2000), ¶2.

Hietamäki acknowledges that “[d]ue to the very different readings of the ARCIC Final Report, the second commission not only had to express the common faith in a common language, but also had to deal with the question of interpreting the already existing agreement.”⁴⁸⁶ Secondly, ARCIC II was charged to provide “practical steps” towards restoring communion. As with ARCIC I, *kononia* is a principle that joins together the statements of ARCIC II.

ARCIC II produced a total of five agreed statements: 1) *Salvation and the Church* (1986), 2) *Church as Communion* (1990), 3) *Life in Christ, Morals Communion and the Church* (1993), 4) *The Gift of Authority: Authority in the Church III* (1998), and 5) *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ* (2004). ARCIC II also issued clarifications on the agreed statements of ARICIC I on Eucharist and ministry in 1993.

According to Paul Murray, the documents of ARCIC I and ARCIC II share four interrelated strategies. Firstly, both the ARCIC dialogues seek to overcome misunderstandings and caricatures by attending to the nuances and articulations of both traditions in order to identify underlying commonalities in belief and practice despite differences in how these commonalities are expressed. Secondly, there is a readiness to acknowledge that, practically speaking, both traditions fall short in bringing Christian belief and practice to expression. Thirdly, both dialogues demonstrate a willingness to examine the beliefs and practices of one’s own church as well as the beliefs and practices of the other in light of new concepts and understandings. Lastly, there is a commitment to acknowledge that in some cases the differences that have developed between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church are “different yet complimentary

⁴⁸⁶ Hietamäki, *Agreeable Agreement : An Examination of the Quest for Consensus in Ecumenical Dialogue*, 97-98.

emphases and languages rather than irreconcilably contradictory and opposed positions.⁴⁸⁷ The basic methods of both ARCIC I and ARCIC II are rooted in the formal strategies of identification in terms of distinction and synthesis. However, the final documents of ARCIC II, *The Gift of Authority* (1998) and *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ* (2005), gesture towards the limits of identification and acknowledges that the differences between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion are not simply manifest at the level of expression. In short, the later documents of ARCIC II recognize that coming to terms with the differences between both communions is not simply a matter of addressing the different sociocultural and intellectual milieus; it is also a matter of acknowledging that there are real differences in terms of belief or practice.

Both documents, *Gift of Authority* (1998) and *Mary Grace and Hope in Christ* (2005), gesture towards an approach to dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion whereby the *real* differences in belief and practice open up a space for ecumenical learning and receptivity.⁴⁸⁸ Put simply, the later documents of ARCIC II, while primarily focused on methods of identification, also signal towards the necessity of recognizing one's-self with respect to the other. The reception of the documents by the authoritative structures of the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church have generally been positive; however, practically speaking, the agreed statements have had little resonance with the faithful of both communions.

⁴⁸⁷ Paul Murray, "Arcic III: Recognising the Need for an Ecumenical Gear-Change," *One in Christ* 45, no. 2 (2012): 202.

⁴⁸⁸ See: Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, "Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ (2004)," in *Growth in Agreement III: International Dialogue Texts and Agreed Statements, 1998-2005*, ed. J. Gros, T.F. Best, and L.F. Fuchs (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 103; Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, "The Gift of Authority: Authority in the Church III (1998)," in *Growth in Agreement III: International Dialogue Texts and Agreed Statements, 1998-2005*, ed. J. Gros, T.F. Best, and L.F. Fuchs (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 77-80.

The limited reception of the ARCIC dialogues and the ARCIC documents within the life of both communions ought not imply nor suggest that they have not born fruit in other significant ways. For instance, the dialogic process that produced *Salvation and the Church* (1987) ultimately paved the way for the 1999 *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* between the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation.

Paul Murray writes:

Through the combination of clearing up misunderstandings and recognizing that not everything always requires to be expressed in the exact same way, respective Protestant and Catholic theologies of justification and salvation have come to appear not as contradictory theological frameworks but as two legitimate and complimentary languages or grammars, each saying what the other believes need to be said , albeit with respectively different emphases.⁴⁸⁹

Simply put, the lessons learned through ecumenical relationship between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church have provided both the theological and dialogic resources for other ecumenical relationships.

7. – *Anglicanorum Coetibus* and the Anglican Covenant

Pope Benedict XVI issued the apostolic constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus* in November of 2009. The constitution established a canonical structure and norms for Anglicans to come into full communion with Rome either corporately or individually. The reception of Benedict's constitution has been mixed. On the one hand, Roman Catholic Church officials maintain that *Anglicanorum Coetibus* is a positive response that is born out of the ecumenical impulse of Vatican II and more than 40 years of ecumenical progress between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion. According to Cardinal William Levada, the head of the CDF and a chief architect of the constitution,

⁴⁸⁹ Murray, "Arcic III: Recognising the Need for an Ecumenical Gear-Change," 204.

Anglicanorum Coetibus “is itself in continuity with the longstanding engagement with Anglicans exemplified by the ARCIC process.”⁴⁹⁰ On the other hand, many critique the constitution as a contemporary attempt at uniaticism. Hans Küng writes:

This Roman action is a dramatic change of course: steering away from the well-proven ecumenical strategy of eye-level dialogue and honest understanding; steering towards an un-ecumenical luring away of Anglican priests, even dispensing with medieval celibacy law to enable them to come back to Rome under the lordship of the pope.⁴⁹¹

A careful analysis of the document itself and its historical context reveals both the uncertainty characteristic of the present-day relationship between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church, as well as the deep admiration and commonality that exists between both communions.

Firstly, *Anglicanorum Coetibus* is not an unprecedented action for either Anglican communities or the Roman Catholic Church. In 1980, John Paul II established the *Pastoral Provision* for clergy and laity of the Episcopal Church of the United States who sought to enter into communion with Rome. The *Pastoral Provision* established a basic structure for establishing communion with Rome while at the same time maintaining much of the discipline, spirituality, and liturgical practice of the Anglican patrimony. It is also not unprecedented for individual communities within the Anglican Communion to seek out and align with doctrinally like-minded churches despite geographic separation. While this practice has generally taken place between member churches of the Anglican Communion, it is not unreasonable, especially in light of the doctrinal convergence

⁴⁹⁰ Cardinal William Levada, "Pope Benedict XVI's Initiatives Regarding the Anglican Communion," *Origins* 39, no. 41 (2010): 669.

⁴⁹¹ Hans Küng, "The Vatican Thirst for Power Divides Christianity and Damages Catholicism," *The Guardian*, October 27, 2009, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2009/oct/27/catholicism-pope-anglicanism-church> (accessed 9/14/15).

discovered through the ARCIC dialogues, for some communities to seek to establish communion with the Roman Catholic Church.⁴⁹²

What is most striking about the constitution, however, is the two different logics at play simultaneously. Two basic presuppositions from *Anglicanorum Coetibus* are characteristic of the contemporary ecumenical relationship between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church. Firstly, the constitution affirms the validity of the Anglican tradition as a real and effective sign and instrument of God's grace. *Anglicanorum Coetibus* reads:

Without excluding liturgical celebrations according to the Roman rite, the ordinariate has the faculty to celebrate the holy Eucharist and the other sacraments, the Liturgy of the Hours and other liturgical celebrations according to the liturgical books proper to the Anglican tradition, which have been approved by the Holy See, so as to maintain the liturgical, spiritual and pastoral traditions of the Anglican Communion within the Catholic Church as a precious gift nourishing the faith of the members of the ordinariate and as a treasure to be shared.⁴⁹³

However, Leo XIII's declaration that Anglican Orders are absolutely null and utterly void still holds as former ministers of the Anglican Communion must be *absolutely* ordained.⁴⁹⁴ Put simply, *Anglicanorum Coetibus* affirms the *phenomenological* validity of the Anglican Communion but denies its *ontological* validity. Cardinal Levada affirms this when he writes:

⁴⁹² Miranda Hasset provides an exhaustive analysis of Anglican communities that break with their local bishops and elect to become mission communities in communion with another bishop. The practice is most frequently adopted by "conservative" communities in America and Europe uncomfortable with "liberal" decisions and practices such as the ordination of women to the presbyterate and episcopate, openly gay bishops, and gay marriage. Miranda Katherine Hasset, *Anglican Communion in Crisis : How Episcopal Dissidents and Their African Allies Are Reshaping Anglicanism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

⁴⁹³ Benedict XVI, "Anglicanorum Coetibus: Apostolic Constitution on New Structure for Welcoming Former Anglicans into the Catholic Church," *Origins* 39, no. 24 (2009): 389.

⁴⁹⁴ Gianfranco Ghirlanda, "The Significance of The Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus*," *Origins* 39, no. 24 (2009): 395.

Union with the Catholic Church is the goal of ecumenism, yet the very process of moving toward union works a change in churches and ecclesial communities that engage one another in dialogue, and actual instances of entering into communion do indeed transform the Catholic Church by way of enrichment. Let me add right away that when I say enrichment, I am referring not to any addition of essential elements of sanctification and truth to the Catholic Church — Christ has endowed her with all the essential elements. I am referring to the addition of modes of expression of these essential elements, modes which enhance everyone's appreciation of the inexhaustible treasures bestowed on the church by her divine founder.⁴⁹⁵

Put another way, *Anglicanorum Coetibus* suggests that *ontological* unity requires absorption, but *phenomenological* unity allows for some degree of diverse expression with a clear preference for ontological unity. The consequences of such a logic are developed at length in the final chapter, however, it is worth mention that such a logic raises questions about the relationship between Christology and Pneumatology, as well as the sacramental relationship between content and expression.

Contemporaneous to *Anglicanorum Coetibus* is the development—within the Anglican communion—of the *Anglican Covenant*. The covenant conceived as a response to growing rifts and unrest within the Anglican Communion. The covenant would, in theory, provide a foundation for assessing and navigating the basic principles of autonomy and interdependence within the Anglican Communion. The principle of interdependence has led to the establishment of the Anglican instruments of communion, while the principle of autonomy has helped to establish clear limits and boundaries on the power and authority of the Lambeth conference, the Anglican Consultative Council, the Primates' meeting, and the Archbishop of Canterbury.⁴⁹⁶ The ultimate goal of the covenant, according to Andrew Goddard, was to develop a common way of “articulating

⁴⁹⁵ Levada, "Pope Benedict XVI's Initiatives Regarding the Anglican Communion," 670.

⁴⁹⁶ Andrew Goddard, "Communion and Covenant: Continuity and Change," in *Pro Communion: Theological Essays on the Anglican Covenant*, ed. Benjamin Guyer (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2012), 41-43.

Anglican identity and recognizing the need to define certain limits to Anglican diversity.”⁴⁹⁷ The *Anglican Covenant*, however, has failed to gain acceptance among the member churches of the Anglican Communion. The apparent failure of the acceptance of the *Anglican Covenant* stems from concerns regarding provincial autonomy.

The failure of the *Anglican Covenant* to find common acceptance within the member churches of the Anglican Communion demonstrates an approach to authority and communion that, at the risk of overgeneralizing, is opposite to that of the Roman Catholic Church. Juxtaposed with one another, *Anglicanorum Coetibus* and the lack of consensus regarding the *Anglican Covenant* reveal two distinct mindsets. The Anglican affinity for diversity makes it leery and suspicious of unity, while the Roman Catholic affinity for unity promotes misgivings regarding diversity and difference. The Anglican fascination for diversity fuels a mindset that tends towards phenomenological analysis. The Roman Catholic fixation on unity fosters a mindset that tends towards ontological and metaphysical analysis.

8. – Conclusion

The history of the relationship between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church is obviously complex. The present-day tension between Rome and Canterbury is about more than what many people might assume is merely the result of divergent practices and beliefs such as the ordination of woman and gay marriage. The ebb and flow of this relationship, especially since Vatican II, however, reveals two issues. Firstly, conflicting interpretations of juridical authority divide the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion. Hence, the Roman affinity for centralization and Anglican desire for decentralization pose significant issues for the process of reception.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid., 46.

Secondly, the Roman Catholic and Anglican mindsets are unique. Anglican sensibilities tend towards phenomenology and difference, while Roman Catholic sensibilities tend towards ontology and unity. Identifying the issues behind the issues does not minimize the importance nor the complexity of contemporary disagreement and divergence between Rome and Canterbury; instead, it is meant to place such disagreements and divergence within a more fundamental context.

As the next chapter elucidates, the ecumenical relationship between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church is in need of resources that take advantage of their respective ontological and phenomenological tendencies in a manner that is mutually enriching. There is no doubt that “full visible communion” is a long way off; however, this need not impede the process of mutual recognition. In short, Anglicans and Roman Catholics must first learn to recognize one another as “gift,” and Karl Rahner’s theology of symbol provides the means for achieving this goal.

CHAPTER FIVE

RETHINKING ANGLICAN-ROMAN CATHOLIC ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE:

SYMBOL, DIALOGUE, AND A SECOND NAÏVETÉ

1. – Introduction

The preceding chapter illustrates some of the basic tensions confronting the ecumenical relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion and evidences a hermeneutical disconnect between both communions. While the dialogues that have taken place between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church have produced remarkable progress in terms of theological understanding, there is little evidence of this progress in the reception of the dialogues in either communion. In other words, the incredible work of the ARCIC dialogues towards mutual recognition through greater theological understanding and explanation elicits little in terms of a shared Christian life and identity between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church. If *koinonia* between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion is to become a reality, it is evident that the hermeneutical disconnect between them must be bridged in a way that allows for the possibility of mutual recognition. This chapter maintains that developing a second naïveté, which is characteristic of a logic that is governed by symbol, is a necessary moment along the path towards mutual recognition and the ultimate goal of visible unity between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church.

Particular churches realize their Christian identity within the particularity of their ecclesiological experiences and commitments. Hence, particular churches and communions arrive at an ecumenically shared Christian identity in and through their own

ecclesial particularity. As John Zizioulas attests, “[e]cumenism is not conceivable as an effort to unite Christians simply as believers in Christ but *as members of a Church*. Ecumenism is about the unity *of the Church*, not about Christian unity as such.”⁴⁹⁸ It follows that the process of ecumenical recognition and the goal of Christian unity must account for the ecclesial dimensions of Christian life; recognition of other churches and unity among Christians are realized through the particularity of churches not in spite of them. An ecumenical Christian identity is an identity that respects unity-in-difference from the vantage point of one’s own ecclesial understanding. The future of the ecumenical movement and in particular the ecumenical relationship between the Anglican Communion not only depends on a personal conversion that allows for the possibility of mutual recognition, but also necessitates an ecclesial conversion. However, the unity sought by the ecumenical movement cannot be directed towards the development of a rigid conformity between churches.

The challenges confronting the ecumenical dialogue between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church are essentially two-fold. Firstly, there is a need for a conversion in terms of the cognitive disposition of individuals and communities and the dialogic methods employed in the ecumenical conversations between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion. The focus of dialogue must shift from seeking recognition via methods of identification towards methods that promote ecumenical learning and reception. Secondly, the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church must take seriously the dispositional challenges involved in articulating and expressing one’s own narrative identity and the

⁴⁹⁸ John Zizioulas, "Unitatis Redintegratio: An Orthodox Reflection," in *Searching for Christian Unity*, ed. Walter Kasper (New York: New City Press, 2007), 41.

implications this involves for both ecumenical learning and the reception of the narrative identity of other churches. Recent developments in the areas of “ecumenical learning” and “receptive ecumenism” offer valuable resources for addressing the dispositional challenges confronting ecumenical dialogue between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church. The relatively new methods of “ecumenical learning” and “receptive ecumenism” surfacing in ecumenical literature rightly acknowledge the need for dispositional conversion, but do not adequately speak to the cognitive and narrative dispositions that undergird and support how individuals and ecclesial groups interpret and appropriate Christian identity and the *koinonia* of Christ’s church. Put another way, the above methods acknowledge the need for conversion and describe how such a conversion can benefit the ecumenical movement, but neither of the methods suggest how the deeply rooted and divergent interpretive and appropriative vantage points, which are bound up in the cognitive and narrative dispositions of separated churches, might be converted.

This chapter argues that Karl Rahner’s theology of symbol offers both the resources and direction necessary for confronting the present-day cognitive and narrative challenges that continue to surface in both the ecumenical dialogues and the reception of the dialogues between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church. The following seeks to reframe the contemporary ecumenical relationship between both communions symbolically and provides a response to the poignant question Michael Kinnamon raises: “[c]an the ecumenical movement, which gave such energy and direction to the church in the twentieth century, be reconceived in a way that provides

renewing power for the church in this era?”⁴⁹⁹. This chapter accomplishes this task through a symbolic reexamination of the ecumenical relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion and the ARCIC dialogues that began more than 40 years ago. In particular, the following demonstrates the value of a symbolic revaluation of both Christian identity and the *koinonia* of Christ’s church. Admittedly, a logic governed by symbol does not resolve the seemingly unsolvable “problems” that have surfaced between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church in recent decades. However, a logic of symbol allows for the possibility of agreement and recognition that looks beyond the limits of a logic of the one over the many that is characteristic of Western ontology and metaphysics.

Firstly, this chapter symbolically reevaluates the notion of Christian identity and *koinonia*. The symbolic revaluation proceeds along the lines of an examination of the marks of the church, i.e. one, holy, catholic, and apostolic and the fundamental activities of the church, i.e. *leitourgia*, *martyria*, and *diakonia* with respect to Rahner’s theology of symbol. Secondly, as the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion begin a new phase of dialogue with ARCIC III, this chapter establishes the importance of symbolically interpreting and appropriating the cognitive and narrative dispositions of the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church. As relationship of unity-in-difference, the interpretation and appropriation of both Christian identity and the *koinonia* of Christ’s church benefit from a logic that is governed by symbol.

⁴⁹⁹ Michael Kinnamon, *Can a Renewal Movement Be Renewed? : Questions for the Future of Ecumenism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 2-3.

2. – Rethinking the Church as the Symbol of God’s Mystery

As a mystery, the church is a reality that is both infinite and knowable and, as such, ultimately eludes definition. However, Western theology tends to articulate the mysterious nature of the church as either infinite or knowable and in so doing prefers to consider the church as an “instrument” of God.⁵⁰⁰ This instrumental view of the church is grounded in an extrinsic interpretation of the church, whereby, with respect to its relationship to God, the church is understood as *the* object and, with respect to its relationship to the world, the church is understood as *the* subject. In short, God acts upon the church and the church acts upon the world. The critical methods of both modernity and postmodernity employ, albeit from different perspectives, work from an instrumental understanding of the church. Hence, the church is interpreted and appropriated either as an objective instrument that produces God’s grace or it functions as the subjective instrument of the transmission of God’s grace.⁵⁰¹

As is the case with the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church, instrumental conceptions of the church inevitably produce a variety of ecumenical impasses that issue from either a sort of ecclesiological indifference that seeks to overlook all difference as inconsequential to the unity of the church or an ecclesiological absolutism that understands difference as a threat to the unity of the church.⁵⁰² If the ecumenical relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion is to succeed in moving past the above understandings, then there must be an effort to advance and embrace an understanding of the of the church that navigates the

⁵⁰⁰ The church as servant is the notable exception.

⁵⁰¹ See: Louis-Marie Chauvet, *The Sacraments : The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2001), xiii-xxv.

⁵⁰² Kinnamon, *The Vision of the Ecumenical Movement and How It Has Been Impoverished by Its Friends*, 63-64.

extremes of ecclesiological indifference and ecclesiological absolutism. This section contends that such an understanding is possible via a symbolic reinterpretation and reappropriation of the church as the symbol of God's mystery.⁵⁰³

The following elucidates an understanding of the church according to a logic that is governed by symbol. It must be stated clearly from the outset of the discussion at hand and in order to avoid any confusion that the intention of this section is *not* to develop an ecclesiology of the ecumenical movement. Instead, the fundamental intention of this section is to develop a hermeneutical approach to ecclesiology that embraces unity and diversity as mutually enriching realities. In short, the intention is to develop an interpretative approach to ecclesiology that is capable of understanding, explaining, and appropriating unity-in-difference.

2.1 - Karl Rahner and the Mysteries of the Church

As chapter two demonstrates, for Rahner, symbols are constitutive of a relationship of unity-in-difference, whereby, both unity and difference are essential for achieving the nature of particular being.⁵⁰⁴ Hence, there is a real harmony between what is symbolized and its concrete expression in the world or symbol. Rahner writes:

A symbol is... not to be primarily considered as a secondary relationship between two different beings, which are given the function of indicating one another by a third, or by an observer who notes a certain agreement between them. The symbolic is not merely an intrinsic propriety of beings in so far as a being, to attain fulfillment, constitutes the differentiation which is retained in the unity, and which is in agreement with the original originating unity and so its expression. A being is also 'symbolic' in itself because the harmonious expression, which it retains while constituting it as the 'other', is the way in which it communicates itself to itself in knowledge and love. A being comes to itself by means of

⁵⁰³ It is important that one does not confuse the following symbolic approach to the church with a universal ecumenical ecclesiology. The intention of this section is not to develop an ecclesiology *of* ecumenism; instead this section attempts to develop an ecclesiology *for* ecumenism.

⁵⁰⁴ See: chapter two pp. 77-79

‘expression’ in so far as it comes to itself at all. The expression, that is, ‘symbol’... is the way of knowledge of self, possession of self, in general.⁵⁰⁵

The church exists within a symbolic relationship to God’s mystery in such a way that, properly understood, it really brings about the mystery of God in which the church originates and is fulfilled. Hence, the symbolic nature of the church is dependent upon its faithfulness to the mystery of God. Put simply, the mystery of God is brought to expression in knowledge and love in and through the church not as an instrument, but as a symbol.

Karl Rahner argues that there are three basic mysteries proper to Christianity: 1) the mystery of the Trinity, 2) the mystery of the incarnation, and 3) the mystery of the supernatural elevation of human beings through in grace.⁵⁰⁶ Rahner writes:

There are these three mysteries in Christianity, no more and no fewer, and the three mysteries affirm the same thing: that God has imparted himself to us through Jesus Christ in his Spirit as he is in himself so that the inexpressible nameless mystery which reigns in us and over us should be in itself the immediate blessedness of the spirit which knows, and transforms itself into love.⁵⁰⁷

Rahner maintains that these three basic mysteries are irreducible “because it is only through revelation... that we can know that such a thing is actual and possible.”⁵⁰⁸

Rahner’s claim that there are three basic mysteries of Christianity is not an endorsement for reducing Christianity to a least common denominator. Instead, his purpose for acknowledging these three mysteries is to emphasize that the fullness of Christian living and belief begins with and is always being led back to the ineffable mystery of the Triune

⁵⁰⁵ Rahner, "The Theology of Symbol," 230.

⁵⁰⁶ Rahner, "The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology."

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid., 72-73.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid., 67.

God with whom humanity exists in relation.⁵⁰⁹ Rahner is concerned with upholding the conviction that Christianity, if it is to be faithful to its origin and fulfillment, must not only be concerned with what it can know about God, but must also humbly recognize that “the climax of our knowledge of God is knowledge of our ignorance.”⁵¹⁰ As such, these are the three mysteries from which Christian activity and belief originate and return and the mysteries to which churches struggle to recall and remain faithful.

2.1.1 – The Nature of the Church: Bringing God’s Mystery to Expression in the World

Recalling Rahner’s first principle of the symbol, in order for the church to achieve its nature, it must express itself as such. However, it does not express itself only for itself. The church, like everything else that exists, expresses itself for the other as well. Simply put, as a symbol the nature of the church is expressed so as to be recognized by itself and by the other. Hence, in order to achieve its nature, the church must express its identity as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic in and through the activities of *martyria*, *diakonia*, and *leitourgia*.

Rahner understands that coming to terms with mystery is a necessary prerequisite for coming to terms with the church. For Rahner, the church is not an easily definable and manageable reality. Instead, the church is a reality that is permeated by and expressive of the holy mystery of God. The church, in its most basic sense, is the concrete continuation of the redemptive activity of Jesus Christ in and through the Holy Spirit. The structure of the church is analogous to the incarnation in so far as it

⁵⁰⁹ For instance, Rahner is not making the claim that the celebration of the Eucharist is not a mystery. The mystery of the Eucharist can not be understood independently. Rahner writes, “[i]f one considers the mystery of transubstantiation, one would have to ask whether such a change of being is conceivable or not apart from the case of Christ, that is, independently of a *unio hypostatica*.”

⁵¹⁰ Rahner, “The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology,” 59.

concretely expresses Jesus Christ in a way that is similar, though not identical, to the way Jesus Christ, as the *Logos* of the Father, presents the Father within the concrete world.⁵¹¹

Thus, the church has a symbolic nature that is consonant with, but not identical to, the structure of the incarnation. Rahner writes:

It [the incarnation] is the very centre of the reality from which we Christians live, of the reality which we believe. For the mystery of the divine Trinity is open to us only here; only here is the mystery of our participation in the divine nature accorded us; and the mystery of the Church is only the extension of the mystery of Christ.⁵¹²

To understand the nature of the church is to understand the incarnation. Rahner summarizes this point:

And insofar as the church is the concreteness of Christ in relation to us, and insofar as Jesus Christ is really the absolute, irrevocable and victorious offer of God as the absolute mystery who gives himself to us in love, the church is the tangible place where we have the assurance and the historical promise that God loves us.⁵¹³

The above situates the nature of the church between the reality of concrete expression on the one hand and the reality of God's mystery on the other. The mystery that the church brings to expression is not its own; the mystery of the church does not originate with the church.

Rahner's focus on incarnation ought not infringe upon the importance of pneumatology for the church. According to Rahner:

The Church is nothing else than the further projection of the historicity and of the visibility of Jesus through space and time, and every word of its message, every one of its sacramental signs, is, once more, nothing else than a part of the world in its

⁵¹¹ There should be an explanatory footnote discussing the nature of the church as creature of the Word and Creature of the spirit from the document the nature and mission of the church.

⁵¹² Rahner, "On the Theology of the Incarnation," 105.

⁵¹³ Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 398.

earthiness, with which the Spirit has united itself indissolubly since the day on which the Logos became flesh.⁵¹⁴

Hence, the bookends of the identity and the life of the church are both the incarnation *and* Pentecost. The church is not simply incarnational in the sense that it makes the God's mystery present. It is also charismatic in so far as it brings the mystery of God to expression in and through the activity of Holy Spirit.

According to Rahner, the church, because of its symbolic nature, is in the process of becoming what it is already, the "People of God". Hence, as God's people, the church is a complex and multivalent reality. Rahner writes that "[t]he Church is not merely a religious institution, established to meet religious needs... [b]ut neither was it simply founded from above by Christ as a spiritual welfare establishment."⁵¹⁵ The church exists in the world as a concrete people who are situated within a variety of cultural and spatiotemporal circumstances, but it also realizes itself as the presence of Christ in these various contexts.

2.1.2 – Interpreting the Mystery of the Church: Ecumenical Possibilities

According to Rahner, in terms of the relationship between the anthropological and theological dimensions of the church "divinity grows in equal, not inverse, proportion to humanity. The adoption of human reality for the manifestation of God is what really redeems and frees the human element and brings it to its highest actuality..."⁵¹⁶ In other words, the church must express its divinely constituted nature in and through its particular situation in the world. In order to express its divine constitution

⁵¹⁴ Karl Rahner, "The Church as the Subject of the Sending of the Holy Spirit," in *Further Theology of the Spiritual Life I*, Theological Investigations (New York: Seabury, 1971), 188-189.

⁵¹⁵ Rahner, "The Church and the Sacraments," 193.

⁵¹⁶ Rahner, "Considerations on the Development of Dogma," 18.

effectively, the church needs to adapt to its particular sociocultural and spatiotemporal circumstances. According to the *Final Report* of ARCIC I:

All generations and cultures must be helped to understand that the good news of salvation is also for them. It is not enough for the Church simply to repeat the original apostolic words. It has also prophetically to translate them in order that hearers in their situation may understand and respond to them. All such restatement must be consonant with the apostolic witness recorded in the Scriptures; for in this witness the preaching and teaching of ministers, and statements of local and universal councils, have their ground and constancy.⁵¹⁷

Hence, on the one hand, the church remains the same throughout history, while on the other hand, the particularity of the church demonstrates a dynamism that is characteristic of a unity-in-difference. Rahner writes:

If therefore the Church is to act aright, and in a manner appropriate to the particular situation prevailing at any given time..., then she must be aware of what she *is* in *this particular* quite concrete sense. It is the constant temptation of the church to conceive of herself *merely* in terms of her own nature... and to conceal from herself her real concrete reality by hiding behind this portrayal of her nature, in other words behind that which she should be.⁵¹⁸

Thus, there are elements of continuity and change in terms of the content and expression of the orthodoxy and orthopraxy church within a particular time and place. Rahner's observations reflect Paul Ricoeur's understanding of *idem* identity and *ipse* identity, whereby, the *idem* identity of the church is reflective of the church's constitution (one, holy, catholic, and apostolic) given to it by Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit and the *ipse* identity is reflective of the identity in which there is constancy amidst change (*martyria*, *diakonia*, and *leitourgia*). In this sense, the *ipse* identity is akin to the symbolic identity or meaning of the church. In other words, the *ipse* identity is the identity of the church as

⁵¹⁷ Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, "Final Report (1981)," 94.

⁵¹⁸ Karl Rahner, "Of the Structure of the People in the Church Today," in *Confrontations* 2, Theological Investigations (New York: Seabury, 1974), 218.

it is manifest with respect the reality of difference and change. Hence, *ipse* identity designates a kind of self-constancy amidst the reality of change. Ricoeur writes:

Self-constancy is for each person that manner of conducting himself or herself so that others can *count on* that person. Because someone is counting on me, I am *accountable for* my actions before another. The term “responsibility” unites both meanings: “counting on” and “being accountable for.” It unites them, adding to them the idea of a *response* to the question “Where are you?” asked by another who needs me. This response is the following: “Here I am!” a response that is a statement of self-constancy.⁵¹⁹

Both Rahner and Ricoeur understand well the ethical implications of existing in a world that changes. The church has the obligation to manifest its identity (*ipse* identity) in a way that is expressive of its God-given identity (*idem* identity). In other words, when someone within their own particularity cries out “God, where are you?” it is the church that is obliged to respond in humility and accountability before God and humanity, “Here I am!”

An adequate interpretation of the church requires an attentiveness to both the theological and the anthropological dimensions of the church. The symbolic nature of the church reveals the dialectic relationship between its theological and anthropological centers. The opening words of *Gaudium et Spes* attest to the conviction that the church exists within a dialogic tension between its relationship to God and humanity.

The joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor and afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community of people united in Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit in their pilgrimage towards the Father’s kingdom, bearers of a message of salvation for all humanity. That is why they cherish a feeling of deep solidarity with the human race and its history.⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁹ Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 165.

⁵²⁰ Vatican II, “*Gaudium Et Spes*,” 163. John Zizioulas concurs with the ecclesiological vision of *Gaudium et Spes* when he writes, “This ecclesiocentric ecumenism should be placed in the context of issues preoccupying humanity in our time. The Church does not live in isolation

Joseph Komonchak attests to the Importance of the insight of *Gaudium et Spes* regarding the intimate connection between the church and God, but warns against tendencies to reduce the nature of the church to a theological reality:

Whatever Christian faith may say about the divine origin, center, and goal of the Church, it never pretends that the Church does not stand on this side of the distinction between Creator and creature. The Church is not God; it is not Jesus Christ; it is not the Holy Spirit. If the Church is the People of God, the Body of Christ, the Temple of the Holy Spirit, it is all of these as a human reality, that is, because certain events occur within the mutually related consciousness of a group of human beings.⁵²¹

In a similar way, Rahner acknowledges that a proper interpretation of the church demands attention to both the anthropological and theological dimensions of the church and their relationship to one another so as to avoid reducing the church to a theological reality that minimizes the anthropological nature of the church or an anthropological reality that lacks its unique identity as the people of God. Rahner writes:

It is one of the constitutive elements of divine revelation that it is given in human word and concept. In so far as this human word is spoken by the Spirit and listened to in Him, it is necessarily referred and intrinsically open to the infinite mystery of that truth which is identical with the reality of God and can only be communicated along with the communication of this reality in itself... All this, however, cannot hide the fact that this word itself is purely a genuine human word and is only competent to make God's word present to us, as long as human word remains such, with all the elements and consequences of coming from the human mind.⁵²²

Thus, understanding the nature of the church is thus a double hermeneutical task. On the one hand, it requires attentiveness to the church as a theological reality and on the other

from the world, and its unity must have an existential significance for humanity indeed for creation as a whole, especially in our time." Zizioulas, 54.

⁵²¹ Joseph A. Komonchak, "Ecclesiology and Social Theory: A Methodological Essay," *The Thomist* 45 (1981): 274-275.

⁵²² Rahner, "Considerations on the Development of Dogma," 18.

hand, it requires attentiveness to the church as an anthropological reality. Roger Haight summarizes:

The strictly historical dynamics of the church at any given time, that is, its social condition and process, is one factor for interpreting the intrinsic meaning of theological statements. And the strictly theological confessions of the church at any given time are part of and data for understanding the church's specific historical development. This epistemological formulation corresponds to the unity postulated in the ontology of the church constituted by a double relationship, to God and to the world...⁵²³

Ultimately, the church eludes definition because of its theological and anthropological complexity. While it is theoretically possible to distinguish between the theological and anthropological realities of the church's nature, in actuality such a distinction is never the case. Hence, trying to define the church is difficult, not because the church is unrecognizable from moment to the next, but because the church is constantly in the process of "becoming" in relation to its anthropological and theological constitutions.

Rahner writes:

... if there is 'becoming' at all..., then 'becoming' in its true form cannot be conceived simply as 'becoming *other*' in which a reality becomes different but does not become more. True 'becoming' must be conceived as something 'becoming *more*', as the coming into being of more reality, as an effective attainment of a greater fullness of being. This 'more' must not be imagined, however, as something simply added to what was there before, but, on the one hand must be something really effected by what was there before and, on the other hand, must be the inner increase of being proper to the previously existing reality. This means, however, that if it is really to be taken seriously, 'becoming' must be understood as a real self-transcendence, a surpassing of self or active filling up of the empty.⁵²⁴

Because the church is in the constant process of becoming what it already is, the people of God, the church is continually called to configure and "reform" itself towards God's

⁵²³ Haight, "Historical Ecclesiology : An Essay on Method in the Study of the Church," 34.

⁵²⁴ Karl Rahner, "Christology within an Evolutionary View of the World," in *Later Writings*, Theological Investigations (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1966), 164.

mystery as the origin and end of the church. ARCIC II attests to reality of church's becoming in *Life in Christ: Morals, Communion, and the Church*. ARCIC II writes:

The Christian life is a response in the Holy Spirit to God's self-giving in Jesus Christ. To this gift of himself in the incarnation, and to this participation in the divine life, the scriptures bear witness (cf. 1 John 1:1-3; 2 Pet. 1:3-4). Made in the image of God (cf. Gen 1:27), and part of God's good creation (cf. Gen. 1:31), women and men are called to grow into the likeness of God, in communion with Christ and with one another.⁵²⁵

Christians generally agree that the church is a mystery. Such general agreement, nevertheless, does not exclude a diversity of interpretations and this is rightfully so considering that the church exists in a variety of contexts. Chapter one of *Lumen Gentium* attests to the variety of images and understandings that have been attributed to the church throughout its history. For instance, in the first chapter of *Lumen Gentium*, the church is described as a sacrament, a sheepfold, God's field, the bride of Christ, God's temple, the body of Christ, the New Jerusalem, and the Pilgrim Church⁵²⁶ *Lumen Gentium* insightfully recognizes that the church is not a problem; it is a mystery.⁵²⁷

⁵²⁵ Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, "Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church (1993)," in *Growth in Agreement II : Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level, 1982-1998*, ed. Jeffrey Gros, Harding Meyer, and William G. Rusch (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2000), 346.

⁵²⁶ Vatican II, "Lumen Gentium," 4-11. In a similar vein the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches states, "Legitimate diversity is not accidental to the life of the Christian community but is rather an aspect of its catholicity, a quality that reflects the fact that it is part of the Father's design that salvation in Christ be incarnational and thus "take flesh" among the various peoples to whom the Gospel is proclaimed. An adequate approach to the mystery of the Church requires the use and interaction of a wide range of images and insights (people of God, body of Christ, temple of the Holy Spirit, vine, flock, bride, household, soldiers, friends and so forth)." Faith and Order Commission World Council of Churches, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* (WCC Publications, 2013), ¶ 12.

⁵²⁷ Acknowledging the mystery of the church and the theological and anthropological natures of the church are central themes of the first chapter of *Lumen Gentium*. Accordingly, "the visible society and the spiritual community, the earthly church and the church endowed with heavenly riches, are not to be thought of as two realities. On the contrary, they form one complex reality comprising a human and a divine element. For this reason, the church is compared, in no mean analogy, to the mystery of the incarnate Word. As the assumed nature, inseparably united to him, serves the divine Word as a living instrument of salvation, so, in somewhat similar fashion,

Along with *Lumen Gentium*, the Second Vatican Council's decree *Unitatis Redintegratio* articulates the broader ecumenical conviction that the unity of Christ's church is rooted in and reflects a mystery that originates with the Trinity:

This is the sacred mystery of the unity of the church, in Christ and through Christ, while the action of the Holy Spirit produces a variety of gifts. It is a mystery that finds its highest model and source in the unity of the persons of the Trinity: the unity of the one God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.⁵²⁸

As a mystery that is infinitely knowable, the church is called to "recollect" Jesus Christ in and through the Holy Spirit amidst the diversity of the world. Hence, reflection on the church and its unity requires a method of interpretation that embraces the aporetic nature of the church and avoids reducing the mystery of the church to a system of universal propositions on the one hand and a completely ungraspable and unknowable reality on the other.

However, a diversity of interpretations ought not exclude the possibility of unity. As an inexhaustible reality, the one Church of Christ comes to expression and is subsequently interpreted in a variety of ways. Such variety ought to be expected and respected. Regarding the need to respect and tolerate difference Rahner writes:

An encounter between two human beings never overcomes an ultimate residue that is unfamiliar and not understandable. Should they perfectly understand each other, they would in fact have become one and the same person. Nor would that be most unreal, it would not be at all interesting. Human beings are such that they accept the other person *as* one whom they do not understand perfectly, *as* familiar, as the one who, to some extent seems strange. This must also be recognized and accepted in the Church.⁵²⁹

does the social structure of the church serve the Spirit of Christ who vivifies it, in the building up of the body (see Eph 4: 16)." Vatican II, "Lumen Gentium."

⁵²⁸ Second Vatican Council, 909.

⁵²⁹ Karl Rahner, "Rites Controversy: New Tasks for the Church," in *Human Society and the Church of Tomorrow*, Theological Investigations (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 137.

Distinctions are meaningful, but they do not exhaust meaning. However, there are limits to tolerance as one cannot say yes to everything. According to Rahner, “The Church and theology should not go so far that, impelled by a love and tolerance that make no distinctions, they say Yes and Amen to everything. When a theologian seeks not merely to reflect on ancient dogma in ever new ways but squarely denies it, then the limit has been reached.”⁵³⁰

Interpreting the church is not only a concern at the level of orthodoxy. The reality of orthopraxis is equally important. “The mystery of the Church” writes Paul VI, “is not a truth to be confined to the realms of speculative theology. It must be lived, so that the faithful may have a kind of intuitive experience of it, even before they come to understand it clearly.”⁵³¹ ARCIC II shares Paul VI’s recognition of the significance of orthopraxis when it writes, “that authentic Christian unity is as much a matter of life as of faith.”⁵³² However, the symbolic nature of the church, which comes to expression through its orthodoxy and orthopraxis, must do so within a diversity of socio-cultural and intellectual milieus.

Interpreting the church is not simply an activity of primary reflection, whereby, the church can be painstakingly understood and explained through distinction and synthesis. Properly understood, the church belongs within the realm of mystery, which calls for “recollection.” In short, the resources proper for ecclesiological reflection are found at the level of secondary reflection, whereby, the complexities of mystery are

⁵³⁰ Ibid., 138.

⁵³¹ Paul VI, “Ecclesiam Suam” (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1964), accessed July 30, 2015, http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_06081964_ecclesiam.html).

⁵³² Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, “Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church (1993),” 344.

interpreted within the unity of experience. Hence the chief task of ecclesiological reflection is to “recollect” the complex and multifaceted experience of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church of Christ that expresses itself as a lived reality through the activities of *martyria*, *diakonia*, and *leitourgia*. Similarly, the admission that the church is a mystery warrants neither an attitude devoid of criticism nor an attitude of unbridled acceptance. In short, modern forms of criticism and postmodern mindsets lack the hermeneutic resources to interpret the mystery of the church.

The purpose of the church for Rahner is two-fold and is most clearly disclosed by Christ’s mandate to “go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature.”⁵³³ On the one hand, the purpose of the church is to proclaim the Good News of salvation within the diversity of the world. On the other hand, the purpose of the church is to unite the diversity of the world to the Good News of salvation. ARCIC II attests in *Salvation and the Church*:

... the church participates in Christ’s mission to the world through proclamation of the Gospel of salvation by its words and deeds. It is called to affirm the sacredness and dignity of the person, the values of natural and political communities and the divine purpose for the human race as a whole; to witness against the structures of sin in society, addressing humanity with the gospel of repentance and forgiveness and making intercession for the world. It is called to be an agent of justice and compassion, challenging and assisting society’s attempts to achieve just judgment, never forgetting that in light of God’s justice all human solutions are provisional.⁵³⁴

The church accomplishes its twofold mission when it realizes its nature as the symbol of Jesus Christ in and through the activities of *leitourgia*, *diakonia*, and, *martyria*. As with all symbols, however, the church is culturally contingent.⁵³⁵ This does not imply that the

⁵³³ NAB Mark 16:15

⁵³⁴ Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, “Salvation and the Church (1986),” 322-323.

⁵³⁵ See Chapter One 3.3.1; Rahner’s understanding the symbols are fluid

church and its message are not counter-cultural in many respects. Instead, it is the acknowledgement that if the church cannot or refuses to interpret and appropriate the “signs of the times” then it cannot achieve its purpose and in fact betrays its symbolic nature. A church that does not recognize itself as a concrete reality of the world and detaches itself from the world is a church that reduces its nature to a theological reality that lacks the competence to realize itself as the symbol of unity and the symbol of salvation. In short, the symbolic efficacy of the church is also diminished.

In light of the world’s diversity, the church cannot bring the *one* Gospel of salvation into a diversity of contexts in a manner that is identical to each context.⁵³⁶ The church, if it is to achieve its mission and realize its nature as a symbol, must be able to proclaim the one Gospel of Christ within the “languages” of the world’s diversity. The Canberra statement succinctly articulates the unitive purpose of the church when it states:

The Purpose of the Church is to unite people with Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, to manifest communion in prayer and action and thus to point to the fullness of communion with God, humanity and the whole creation in the Glory of the kingdom.⁵³⁷

Hence, the church must be a humble student of the various sociocultural and spatiotemporal contexts before it can effectively inculturate the Gospel entrusted to it. In order to achieve its purpose, the church must inculturate itself in a variety of contexts.

Rahner writes:

... the Church has regarded itself always and everywhere as a real community and an institutional society, seeing this institutionality not merely as something

⁵³⁶ Catherin Bell offers an important critique on the “hidden” tendency within theology that often unwillingly absorbs plurality under its own categories of thought. Bell writes that “[t]heology must recognize difference, real difference, which is a matter of opening all doors, not knowing all the answers.” Catherine Bell, “Constraints on the Theological Absorption of Plurality,” in *Rahner Beyond Rahner*, ed. Paul G. Crowley (New York: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005), 42.

⁵³⁷ World Council of Churches, “The Unity of the Church as Koinonia: Gift and Calling,” 124.

humanly unavoidable but as its indispensable essential element, even though this essential ‘visibility’ of the Church has been diversely interpreted and put into practice in the different Christian denominations. It is only such an historical factor in the word as proclaimed, in the sacramental and the sociological character implied in all this, that it can be what it has to be: the permanent historical presence of God’s victorious self-promise in Jesus Christ, the sacrament of the world’s salvation...⁵³⁸

Thus, the basic purpose of the church is to “recollect” the mystery of salvation through Jesus Christ within the diversity of the world as a symbol. Thus, the church, called together and animated by the Holy Spirit “recollects” Jesus Christ within the particularity of a given sociocultural and intellectual context. To put it another way using Ricoeur’s famous dictum, “The symbol gives rise to thought”; the church, in and through the Holy Spirit, gives rise to God’s promise of salvation, through Jesus Christ the definitive and abiding expression of God’s salvific will, within a plurality of circumstances.⁵³⁹

2.2 – Conclusion

⁵³⁸ Rahner, "Unity of the Church - Unity of Mankind," 166.

⁵³⁹ Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 348.; The Faith and Order Commission of the WCC that the church is the creature of the Word and the creature of the Spirit. In both instances there is a symbolic quality to Faith and Order Commission’s understanding despite the apparent difference in language. “Being the creature of God’s own Word and Spirit, the Church is one, holy, catholic and apostolic. These essential attributes flow from and illustrate the Church’s dependence upon God. The Church is one because God is the one creator and redeemer (cf. Jn 17:11, Eph 4:1-6), who binds the Church to himself by Word and Spirit and makes it a foretaste and instrument for the redemption of all created reality. The Church is holy because God is the holy one (cf. Is 6:3; Lev 11:44-45) who sent his Son Jesus Christ to overcome all unholiness and to call human beings to become merciful like his Father (cf. Lk 6:36), sanctifying the Church by his word of forgiveness in the Holy Spirit and making it his own, the body of Christ (Eph 5:26-27). The Church is catholic because God is the fullness of life ‘who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth’ (1 Tim 2:4), and who, through Word and Spirit, makes his people the place and instrument of his saving and life-giving presence, the community “in which, in all ages, the Holy Spirit makes the believers participants in Christ’s life and salvation, regardless of their sex, race or social position” It is apostolic because the Word of God, sent by the Father, creates and sustains the Church. This word of God is made known to us through the Gospel primarily and normatively borne witness to by the apostles (cf. Eph 2:20; Rev 21:14), making the communion of the faithful a community that lives in, and is responsible for, the succession of the apostolic truth expressed in faith and life throughout the ages.”

Understanding and explaining the church using a logic governed by symbol provides the basis for an appropriation of key aspects of an ecumenical church. The phrase ecumenical church is not an ecclesiological expression *per se*, but instead is characteristic of an attitude within a particular ecclesiological understanding that is open to ecumenical possibilities. A logic governed by symbol understands the church as a differentiated unity, whereby, unity obtains not through absorption, but through the complexities of the relationship between unity and difference.

By way of summary, Richard Lennan provides six key points to Rahner's symbolic ecclesiology that highlight its significance for envisioning an ecumenical church. Firstly, approaching the church from an ecclesiology governed by a logic of symbol shifts the attention from a primary focus on the juridical and authoritative aspects of the church towards the church's theological constitution. This shift, however, does not disregard the juridical and authoritative; it simply understands it in relationship to the theological. Hence, there is attentiveness to *what* the church communicates, not merely *who* is communicating.⁵⁴⁰ Secondly, as a differentiated unity, the church exists within a dialectical tension between its mystical and institutional characteristics. As such, contrasting the freedom of God's Spirit and the concrete reality of the church is unwarranted. Instead, both aspects of the church and their relationship to one another establish the church's unity.⁵⁴¹ Thirdly, Rahner's theology of symbol calls attention to the significance of pneumatology for ecclesiology. "The identification of the Church as the primary sacrament [symbol] of the Holy Spirit" writes Richard Lennan, "established a

⁵⁴⁰ Richard Lennan, "Ecclesiology and Ecumenism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner*, ed. Declan Marmion and Mary E. Hines (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 119.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 132.

link between the church and all manifestations of the Spirit.”⁵⁴² Fourthly, the church, as symbol realizes itself through its faithful expression as both the “bearer of God’s word” and the subject of God’s word.⁵⁴³ A symbolic approach recognizes that church is not only the expression of God’s Word for the world, the Word is also addressed to the church. Through God’s Word for the church, the church more fully realizes itself. Fifthly, a symbolic approach to the church reframes the relationship between the Sacraments as activities of the church and the Gospel. Rahner writes:

Grace is always there in the form of the word: grace is present always and everywhere from beginning to end, from the first word of preaching to the sacrament inclusively, in the form of the word. And this one word of grace and this one grace in the word has its own proper stages as the word of God, as the word accepted existentially in faith, as the word of the Church. And where this word attains its absolute climax, as the incarnational and eschatological word of God, and absolute self-expression of the Church as a whole and as directed to the individual, the word of the Eucharist is heard.⁵⁴⁴

Lennan acknowledges that, “Rahner’s description of the church and its sacramental actions as ‘exhibitive’ words that made present the grace if the spirit demonstrated that ‘word’ and ‘sacrament’ were not polar opposites.”⁵⁴⁵ Hence, Word and Sacraments, while not identical, are concrete expressions of the same salvific offer. Lastly, Lennan contends that Rahner’s symbolic understanding of the church allows for the recognition that the entire people of God are sharers in the Holy Spirit.⁵⁴⁶ It is precisely because of the ‘mystical’ activity of the Holy Spirit that the church is able to gather into a visibly structured community. Hence, while the entire people of God share in the same Holy Spirit, they do so in accord with their own gifts and capabilities.

⁵⁴² *ibid.*

⁵⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁴ Rahner, “Word and Eucharist,” 286.

⁵⁴⁵ Lennan, 120.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

When a particular church abstracts and excludes particular aspects of the church it is less expressive of the one church of Christ. Such a context leads to distinct understandings and explanations of the church that according to traditional ecumenical methods that rely on distinction and synthesis appear irreconcilable. This, unfortunately, is the contemporary context of Christendom: a church in search of its unity. However, the search for unity amongst the churches entails a logic that thinks of the one church of Christ as a church of unity-in-difference. Rahner writes:

... this unity of Churches which is being sought and is really possible will be much more pluralistic in character, both theologically and institutionally, than what we have hitherto known, at least up to recent times and in the Catholic Church. This holds when we are sure and want to maintain that the one Church we are seeking cannot be as a result of arbitrarily reducing the number of Catholic dogmas, but only through a really forward-thinking fresh understanding of the whole substance of dogma and a lively discussion on the part of all Churches in their common world-wide developing mental and social situation: a discussion which will become more and more urgent for the future.⁵⁴⁷

3. – A Symbolic Rethinking of Christian Identity and Koinonia

As the previous section demonstrates, there is good reason to think about the church from the perspective of symbol. Particular churches, as symbols of God's mystery, do not originate from orthodoxy and orthopraxis; instead, churches originate and are fulfilled by the mystery of God. Put another way, belief and activity are not unique to Christian churches. It is the relationship of Christian churches to the mystery of God, revealed in the person of Jesus Christ and animated by the Holy Spirit, that Christian identity and *koinonia* originate. However, without the visible expression of orthodoxy *and* orthopraxis there is no church. Hence, churches are not only called to be receptive to God's mystery, but churches are also called to bring the mystery of God to visible expression. The churches are not solely instruments of God's grace, but are

⁵⁴⁷ Karl Rahner, *Shape of the Church to Come* (London: SPCK, 1972), 102.

symbols in the sense that churches exist at the boundary between the mystery of human existence and its fulfillment in God's mystery. William Dych writes:

It follows from Karl Rahner's understanding of grace as universally offered to all people through Christ, and of the Church as the visible, historical sign of this grace, that being a Christian and a member of the Church does not separate one from those who are not, but gives expression to one's union with them. Christian identity is not exclusive and divisive, but inclusive and unitive.⁵⁴⁸

Churches give concrete expression to the *unifying* otherness of God's mystery that is common to all humanity in and through the particularity of Christian belief and activity.

This section provides a symbolic approach to the concrete and visible identity of the church as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic and shared fundamental visible activities of the church; *martyria*, *leitourgia*, and *diakonia*.

3.1 – Christian Identity and Belief

The unity of the church is not a reality that the church achieves; instead, the unity of the church is an already existing reality that the church struggles to visibly express amidst a changing world. Undoubtedly, real divisions have arisen throughout Christian history, however, as Rahner rightly acknowledges, the divisions that have arisen at the level of belief are not as fundamental as the beliefs that unites Christians within a common identity as God's people. Rahner writes:

In and through our profession of faith in the God of Jesus Christ the redeemer, in his grace, in his word, and in the eschatological salvation which is given through him, we are united in the hierarchy of truths in a unity which is deeper than the unity that is hindered by the controversial theological questions which divide the churches... Christians are united in a more radical way than they are divided, although they are divided in a true and important sense... But as Christians we can and must say that what unites us in our profession of faith is more fundamental, more decisive and more significant for salvation than what divides us.⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁸ William Dych, *Karl Rahner* (New York: Wellington House, 2000), 116.

⁵⁴⁹ Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 367-368.

The visible expression of the church's unity is a symbolic realization. There is only *one* God, *one* people of God, *one* Gospel, *one* Baptism, *one* faith, etc. However, the expression or symbol of unity and the already existing reality of unity that is symbolized by the church are not identical. As such, a symbolic interpretation of unity pushes beyond, without entirely leaving behind, quantitative reflection so as to move towards an analysis of unity that is qualitative. Whether or not a particular symbol of unity is efficacious is determined according to its qualitative relationship to the reality of unity that is symbolized.

Discussions on the unity of the church within ecumenical dialogue, unfortunately, move towards the extremes of institutional communion on the one hand and spiritual communion on the other. In light of the tension between spiritual communion and institutional communion, the unity of the church manifests two sets of questions. Firstly, there are questions about what is necessary for the unity of church in terms of its structures of authority, propositional statements, celebration of rituals, etc. Secondly, there are questions about what is necessary in terms of faith and belief. When interpreted from the vantage point of the symbol, both the internal and external aspects of the church are not only congenial to one another, but also as exist in a real and necessary relationship. What is imperative, however, is the acknowledgement that the contemporary state of disunity diminishes and offends the quality and integrity of the visible expression of the one Christ of church both in its particular and universal expressions. Rahner and Fries write:

...the separation of the churches is a violation of the testament of Jesus Christ and the apostles, and moreover constitutes a continuing scandal which renders the churches themselves – and their message to the world of today – less and less credible. We become guilty all over again if the separation of the churches does

not distress us to the greatest extent and does not require an all-out effort of us.⁵⁵⁰

Hence, the visible disunity of the church expresses a reality that is contrary not only to the identity of the church of Christ, but to individual Christians as well. A logic governed by symbol reframes questions regarding the unity of the church. Accordingly, analysis of the unity of the church that is governed by a logic of symbol asks how the spiritual and visible structures of the other express the unity of Christ's church both for itself (*ad intra*) and for the other (*ad extra*). This does not imply that all symbols are equally effective; symbols can vary in terms of their quality. However, it does allow for a positive and constructive attitude towards the other that fosters the conviction that Christ really is present through the Holy Spirit in the church of the other.

As with the unity of the church, the church's holiness and the holiness of its members do not originate with the church. The church and its members are holy because of their relationship to God's mystery. Both the institutional and spiritual approaches to the church have difficulty coming to terms with and explaining the sinfulness of the church and its members. A symbolic approach, however, takes account of human freedom in such a way that while the church remains holy, its members in freedom choose to act (or not act) sinfully. Rahner writes:

She [the church] is a whole, from the human point of view, one who is utterly incapable by her own power of performing any saving act or reaching a state of justice, who is therefore in this sense also sinful; and she is by God prevenient, efficacious grace to which she has been absolutely predestined one who has been raised to true holiness, even though on earth this divinely bestowed holiness still has to grow.⁵⁵¹

It is God who brings the church, the people of God, into existence, not human beings.

This does not negate the influence of a sinful humanity; it simply recalls that the church,

⁵⁵⁰ Fries and Rahner, *Unity of the Churches: An Actual Possibility*, 4.

⁵⁵¹ Rahner, "The Sinful Church in the Decrees of Vatican II," 291.

as a symbol, is in the process of becoming. Churches are called by their nature to seek out and bring to expression God's mystery. Rahner writes:

The really ultimate thing [about being a Christian] is that he accepts himself just as he is, and does this without making anything an idol, without leaving anything out, and without closing himself to the totality of what in the ultimate depths of reality is inescapably imposed upon man as his task.⁵⁵²

Holiness, for Rahner, is related to the radical openness to God's ineffable mystery.

Hence, the church, because of its call to express God's mystery is called to holiness in so far as it exhibits an openness and attentiveness to God's mystery in the world. ARCIC II attests to this when it writes:

Since the Holy Spirit is given to all the people of God, it is within the church as a whole, individuals as well as communities, that the living memory of the faith is active. All authentic insights as perceptions, therefore, have their place within the life and faith of the whole church, the temple of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁵³

When the church and its members refuse to acknowledge God's mystery, close off avenues of God's mystery, or confuse the symbolic expression of God's mystery with God's mystery they betray their call to holiness. Hence, holiness, from the perspective of symbol, is oriented towards a radical reception of God's mystery.

If the holiness of churches and the members of churches is characteristic of a radical receptivity, the catholicity of churches is characteristic of the universality of the message of salvation common to all churches. Hence, the catholicity, or universality, of the church, from the perspective of symbol means that the church is non-exclusive insofar as the church's message of salvation in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit is for all people, at all times, in all cultures, and in all places. Hence, the catholicity of the church

⁵⁵² Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 402.

⁵⁵³ Anglican-Roman Catholic Preparatory Commission, "Church as Communion (1990)," in *Growth in Agreement II : Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level, 1982-1998*, ed. Jeffrey Gros, Harding Meyer, and William G. Rusch (Geneva;: WCC Publications, 2000), 336.

is a mark that encapsulates the tension of unity-in-difference. Because it is universal, the one church of Christ is also diverse.⁵⁵⁴ ARCIC II maintains that:

Throughout history the church has been called to demonstrate that salvation is not restricted to particular cultures. This is evident in the variety of liturgies and forms of spirituality, in the variety of disciplines and ways of exercising authority, in the variety of theological approaches, and even in the variety of theological expression of the same doctrines. These varieties compliment one another, showing that, as the result of communion with God in Christ, diversity does not lead to division; on the contrary, it serves to bring glory to God in the munificence of his gifts. Thus the Church in its catholicity is the place where God brings glory to his name through the communion of those created in his own image and likeness, so diverse, yet so profoundly one.⁵⁵⁵

As with the other marks of the church, the church's universality originates with God.

Thus, the catholicity of the church is better understood as a task insofar as the church is called to bring the mystery of God to expression in a diversity of ways.

Interpreting and appropriating the catholicity of the church using a logic that is governed by symbol requires attention to both the particular expression of a particular church and the church as a universal reality. The particularity of churches, which emerges out of the unique historical circumstances of communities illustrates the intimate relationship between human history and salvation history. Rahner writes:

⁵⁵⁴ The catholicity of the Church is not just spatial or geographical; "catholicity" implies an inclusiveness toward Church membership. As James Joyce said in *Finnegan's Wake*, "Catholic means here comes everybody." Because of its mission of proclaiming the universality of salvation in Jesus, the Church must embrace all peoples, classes, races, and cultures. "Catholicity" means that the Church includes within itself all humanity—saints and sinners, rich and poor, adults and children, even infants. The Catholic Church exalts in this rich diversity; it includes in its fellowship warriors and pacifists, liberation theologians and the members of Opus Dei, anarchist Catholic Workers and Catholics United for the Faith, charismatics, feminists, traditionalists, singles, married and divorced, gays and straights, monks and nuns, hermits, married priests in Eastern Rite Catholic Churches, celibate clergy in the West, faith healers and philosophers, mystics and activists. The doctrine of the communion of saints extends this fellowship to all those who have died in the Lord, the saints—canonized or not—the holy ones of the Hebrew Scriptures, and the souls who have died but not yet entered the fullness of eternal life." Thomas P. Rausch, *Catholicism in the Third Millennium* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2003), xiii.

⁵⁵⁵ Anglican-Roman Catholic Preparatory Commission, "Church as Communion (1990)," 337.

Here in Christ and in the Church, saving history reaches its clearest and absolutely permanent distinction from profane history and becomes really an unequivocally distinct manifestation within the history of the world, thus bringing the general salvation-history to self-realization and to its historical reality in word and social structures within the history of the world.

The church as it exists within particular concrete circumstances brings about the universal message of God's salvific will for all of humanity, but in a way that is contingent upon a diversity of socio-cultural and intellectual contexts.

The apostolic identity of the church is susceptible to interpretations that highlight either spiritual or institutional elements of the church. In the case of the former, for instance, faithfulness to the apostolic authenticity of the church is guaranteed through faithful adherence to the Christian Scriptures and the lived experience of the early church.

A symbolic approach acknowledges the need for both the institutional and spiritual elements of the church. As the people of God, the church must be a recognizable people. As a symbolic expression, the apostolicity of the church must point to and present as a contemporary reality the apostolic testimony. Hence, while the apostolic testimony does not change, the expression must if it is to become recognizable amidst the diversity of the world.

Interpreting the apostolicity of the church, at least from the perspective of symbol, is open to the possibility of a plurality of church structures. Without claiming that all expressions of apostolicity equally express the church's continuity with the apostolic testimony, it is certainly not the case that the church of the other is devoid of apostolic testimony. This is most apparent, for example, in the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and mainline Protestant Churches. The Roman Catholic Church, until recently, almost exclusively stressed the institutional aspects of apostolic succession and

tended to minimize the importance of scripture in the daily life of its members.

Protestants, however, tended to ignore the institutional aspects of apostolic succession,

but nurtured a sense of the importance of scripture in the daily life of its members.

However, both manners of expressing the apostolicity of church need not be interpreted as mutually exclusive. According to ARCIC II:

Faithfulness must be realized in daily life. Consequently in every age and culture authentic faithfulness is expressed in ways and by fresh insights through which the understanding of the apostolic preaching is enriched. Thus the gospel is not transmitted solely as a text. The living Word of God, together with the Spirit, communicates God's invitation to communion to the whole of his world in every age. This dynamic process constitutes what is called the living tradition, the memory of the church. Without this faithful transmission of gospel is impossible.

The apostolic witness of Jesus Christ that Scripture contains is brought to a variety of expressions by the church from one generation to the next. Hence, the apostolicity of the church is intimately connected with both the faithfulness of the church to the teaching of the apostles and the contemporary teaching authority of churches. Apostolic authority is fundamentally rooted in the authority of revelation not *vice versa*. Rahner writes:

... the Church is a community with a common faith and creed oriented to the unsurpassable salvific significance of Jesus Christ, and thus that the Church has something to do with teaching... It should also remain clear that the teaching authority, however it is to be conceived..., derives its sustenance and its life from the "authority" of the truth to which the Church bears witness. A mere appeal to the formal teaching authority of the ecclesial teaching office, if it is not combined with an ongoing, intensive effort to elucidate the meaning of what is proclaimed and taught, would ultimately result in the destruction of faith itself...; hence faith may not be reduced to mere obedience to the formal teaching authority of the Church. Furthermore, the existence and the claim of an ecclesial teaching instance is itself an object and a secondary one at that, of that faith which, antecedent to this recognition of the teaching authority, lives from the compelling power of the truth contained in God's revelation of himself in Jesus Christ.⁵⁵⁶

The teaching authority of the church originates in the authority of God's mystery as it is

⁵⁵⁶ Karl Rahner, "Authority," in *Final Writings*, Theological Investigations (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 84.

revealed in the apostolic testimony of Scripture. The need for authoritative interpretation of the revelation is integral to bringing about faithful witness to God's mystery in the world. However, the need for authoritative interpretation ought not overshadow the reality that "the ecclesial teaching authority is dependent on the 'authority' of revelation which ultimately (despite all the *reciprocally* conditioned relationships that the concrete realization of faith involves) sustains the teaching authority and is not sustained by it."⁵⁵⁷

3.2 – A Symbolic Rethinking of Koinonia

Having analyzed the symbolic nature of the church and its identifying marks, it is now possible to turn from questions directed at elucidating the symbolic of identity of the church and its members towards questions about the symbolic activities of the church through which the church expresses itself as the symbol of God's mystery. As a symbol, the church is fundamentally an expressive reality, which means that the church is not static. From a symbolic perspective, the church is a dynamic reality that consists of an original unity, an "other" or medium, and a perfected unity.⁵⁵⁸ Thus, the symbolic activities of the church are those undertakings of the church that "recollect" the mystery of God with which the church is identified. In other words, the symbolic activities of the church are those activities of the church whereby the process of emanation and return occur. As the following demonstrates, the activities of the church, from the perspective of symbol, accounts for the principal tasks of the church in which the church becomes what it claims to be. Hence, a symbolic approach to the church focuses on how the church expresses itself, because it is through the expression that a particular entity comes to be known for itself and for the other.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁸ Fields, *Being as Symbol*, 6-7.

The church realizes its symbolic nature through the fundamental activities of *martyria*, *diakonia*, and *leitourgia*. The ARCIC documents identify the church's relationship to the God's mystery as *koinonia*. The understanding of *koinonia* put forth in the *Final Report* attests to the symbolic relationship between the church and the basic mysteries Rahner identifies. The *Introduction* to the *Final Report* of ARCIC I reads:

Union with God in Christ Jesus through the Spirit is the heart of Christian *Koinonia*. Among these various ways in which the term *koinonia* is used in different New Testament contexts, we concentrate on that which signifies the relation between persons resulting from their participation in one and the same reality (cf. John 1.3). The son of God has taken to himself our human nature, and has sent upon us his Spirit, who makes us truly members of the body of Christ that we are too able to call God 'Abba, Father' (Rom. 8.15, Gal. 4.6). Moreover, sharing in the Holy Spirit, whereby we become members of the same body of Christ and adopted children of the same Father, we are bound to one another in a completely new relationship. *Koinonia* with one another is entailed by our *koinonia* with God in Christ. This is the mystery of the Church.⁵⁵⁹

These basic activities of the church manifest the identity of the church as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic so that it is recognizable as such. The church achieves its nature as the symbol of unity and the symbol of salvation in and through the activities of worship, witness, and service. Each of these activities is a task that attests to the already present reality of salvation on the one hand and its eschatological fulfillment on the other. Worship, service, and witness are activities that the entire church shares in common.

The activity of witness entails *giving* authentic expression to faith in Jesus Christ as the bearer of the universal salvific will of God. According to Rowan Crews, "[t]he witness of the church and the unity of the church are inseparable" and as symbols, "together they arise from and point to the Lord's own witness, his martyrdom, which united God and humanity."⁵⁶⁰ Thus, there are two aspects of the church's activity of

⁵⁵⁹ Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, "Final Report (1981)," 65.

⁵⁶⁰ Lossky, *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, s.v. "martyrdom".

witness that deserve attention. Firstly, witness has political character in far as it is an activity of the church directed towards the world. Secondly, witness, insofar as it is accepted is an integral way in the church realizes itself. Rahner writes:

The public and social character of this witness is ... that of the 'world' and that of the 'church' because and to the extent that, this witness appears as a 'claimant', i.e. one who demands agreement and who essentially incurs the risk of remaining unheeded and being rejected. In other words it is addressed in public to another who can also be one who rejects this witness and is called the 'world' in the sense usually intended in Christian terminology in that here it is... assumed that in principle all men can and must be summoned by this witness, i.e. this witness cannot be regarded as having, in the fullness of its nature, a particular application, but constitutes, rather, a universal message. Wherever, by contrast, this witness is expressed and also hearkened to, something is constituted in him who bears the witness and him who hearkens to it... which we here call... the 'Church'.⁵⁶¹

The church in and through the Holy Spirit witnesses to the unity of humanity and its fulfillment in salvation. Through the activity of witness, the church realizes itself as an effective or transformative symbol. The Anglican-Roman Catholic Preparatory Commission writes:

The life-giving obedience of Jesus Christ calls forth through the Spirit our "Amen" to God the Father. In this "Amen" through Christ we glorify God, who gives the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge of his faithfulness (cf. 2 Cor 1.20-22). We are called in Christ to witness to God's purpose (cf. Lk 24.46-49), a witness that may for us too include obedience to the point of death. In Christ obedience is not a burden (cf. 1 Jn 5.3). It springs from the liberation given by the Spirit of God. The divine "Yes" and our "Amen" are clearly seen in baptism, when in the company of the faithful we say "Amen" to God's work in Christ. By the Spirit, our "Amen" as believers is incorporated in the "Amen" of Christ, through whom, with whom, and in whom we worship the Father.⁵⁶²

The activity of witnessing to God's salvific will is unique to the church. *Martyria* realizes the church's nature by testifying to the marks of the church's identity. The

⁵⁶¹ Karl Rahner, "Theological Observations on the Concept of "Witness", in *Theology, Anthropology, Christology*, Theological Investigations (New York: Seabury, 1975), 164.

⁵⁶² Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, "The Gift of Authority: Authority in the Church III (1998)," 64.

church manifests unity when it testifies to the unity of God, humanity, and creation. The church expresses holiness when it testifies to the holiness of God, humanity, and creation. The church expresses its catholicity when it testifies that God wills the salvation of all of humanity and the redemption of all of creation.⁵⁶³ Finally, the church brings about its apostolic nature when it witnesses to the testimony of the apostles. Thus, the activity of witness is a task of the church by which it asymptotically realizes and moves towards its fulfillment.

The church also realizes its nature through the symbolic activity of *diakonia* or service. *Diakonia* is the “responsible service of the gospel by deeds and by words preformed by Christians in response to the needs of people.”⁵⁶⁴ As a symbolic activity, *diakonia* is an efficacious experience of salvation. The Faith and Order Commission attests that service is a symbolic activity of the church:

As Christ’s mission encompassed the preaching of the Word of God and the commitment to care for those suffering and in need, so the apostolic Church in its mission from the beginning combined preaching of the Word, the call to repentance, faith, baptism and *diakonia*. This the Church understands as an essential dimension of its identity. The Church in this way signifies, participates in, and anticipates the new humanity God wants, and also serves to proclaim God’s grace in human situations and needs until Christ Comes in Glory (cf. Mt 25:31).⁵⁶⁵

The activity of service recollects Jesus Christ in a manner that is unique, while not altogether removed from *martyria*. Through the activity of service, the church is a visible tangible expression of salvation in so far as it heals and reconciles the painful effects of sin. In other words, through the activity of *diakonia* God’s promise of salvation is

⁵⁶³ We know that all creation is groaning in labor pains even until now and not only that, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, we also groan within ourselves as we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. (Rom 8:22-23, NAB)

⁵⁶⁴ Lossky, *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. s.v. “*diakonia*”

⁵⁶⁵ Nature and Mission WCC Faith and Order Commission, "The Nature and Mission of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement" (Geneva: WCC, 2005), ¶38.

brought to visible expression and experience. The *diakonia* of the church is a response to the needs of a people in a particular context. Thus, while *diakonia* is the embodiment of God's loving gift of salvation, the experience of salvation must play out as a task of the church to specific needs of people.

The final basic symbolic activity of the church is *leitourgia* or worship of the church. The worship of the church is the "public, common action of a Christian community in which the church is both manifested and realized."⁵⁶⁶ Liturgical activity manifests the identity of the church in a unique and central manner. Through the liturgy, or the work of the people, the faith and belief of the church are brought to visible expression. In short, *lex orandi, lex credendi*.

The activity of *leitourgia* is twofold. Firstly, the liturgy assembles or "recollects" the church at a specific time and place. Secondly, having "recollected" Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection, the liturgy disperses the church into the world. Rahner writes that worship is "the explicit and reflex, symbolic presentation of the salvation event which is occurring always and everywhere in the world; the liturgy of the Church is the symbolic presentation of the liturgy of the world."⁵⁶⁷ Hence, worship expresses through the world the hidden presence of God's mystery that is always and already in the world. Rahner maintains the attentiveness to the symbolic quality of worship means that "worship will be seen, not as a strange, reserved, special region in secular life, not as divine liturgy *in* the world, but as the divine liturgy of the world, as manifestation of the divine liturgy which is identical with salvation history."⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁶ Lossky, *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, s.v. "liturgy"

⁵⁶⁷ Karl Rahner, "On the Theology of Worship," in *Faith and Ministry*, Theological Investigations (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 146.

⁵⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 149.

4. – ARCIC III and Receptive Ecumenism: The Need for Narrative and Cognitive Conversion

In November of 2006, Pope Benedict XVI and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, expressed their common desire and commitment to the continuation of dialogues between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church despite the development of new divisions. In the 2006 *Joint Declaration*, the Pope and Archbishop wrote:

In this fraternal visit, we celebrate the good which has come from these four decades of dialogue. We are grateful to God for the gifts of grace which have accompanied them. At the same time, our long journey together makes it necessary to acknowledge publicly the challenge represented by new developments which, besides being divisive for Anglicans, present serious obstacles to our ecumenical progress. It is a matter of urgency, therefore, that in renewing our commitment to pursue the path toward full visible communion in the truth and love of Christ, we also commit ourselves in our continuing dialogue to address the important issues involved in the emerging ecclesiological and ethical factors making that journey more difficult and arduous.⁵⁶⁹

ARCIC III was formally announced on February 4, 2011 in response to the 2006 joint declaration. The members of ARCIC III met for the first time in May 2011 with the mandate to explore the “the church as communion, local and universal, and how in communion the local and universal church come to discern right ethical teaching.”⁵⁷⁰ In the *Communiqué from the Meeting of ARCIC III at Bose, Italy*, the committee acknowledged the necessity of a change in method regarding ecumenical dialogue between Anglicans and Roman Catholics. The communiqué reads:

In considering the method that ARCIC III will use, the Commission was particularly helped by the approach of ‘receptive ecumenism’, which seeks to make ecumenical progress by learning from our partner, rather than simply asking our partner to learn from us. Receptive ecumenism is more about self-examination

⁵⁶⁹ Benedict XVI and Archbishop Rowan Williams, "Joint Declaration " *Origins* 36, no. 26 (2006): 406.

⁵⁷⁰ Edmond Brosnan, Ed. "On File " *Origins* 41, no. 5 (2011): 80.

and inner conversion than convincing the other; Anglicans and Roman Catholics can help each other grow in faith, life and witness to Christ if they are open to being transformed by God's grace mediated through each other. ARCIC is committed to modeling the receptive ecumenism it advocates. It intends to find ways to consult with the members of its churches at many levels as its work matures.⁵⁷¹

The decision to pursue dialogue from the methodological perspective of receptive ecumenism is a significant development in the dialogic process between the Anglican Communion and Roman Catholic Church. The shift in method reflects the conviction that the present-day ecumenical movement faces a context in which the issues surrounding a divided church are not simply doctrinal in nature, but extend to issues of the church's orthopraxis.

The endorsement of receptive ecumenism by ARCIC III is no doubt influenced by Paul Murray, a member of ARCIC III and advocate of the method of receptive ecumenism that developed out of the University of Durham. Murray writes:

We are at a point where the traditional formal strategies, for all their erstwhile success, have for the time being quite possibly gone as far as they can on most fronts. They are fine for problems based either in misunderstanding or the erroneous assumption that a point can only be expressed in one way and must be expressed in the exact same way failing to appreciate that it is not always necessary to choose between alternate expressions. But many of the problems that are now regarded as dividing traditions simply do not lend themselves to being resolved in this way.⁵⁷²

As a method, receptive ecumenism seeks to turn the ecumenical process and ecumenical thinking on its head by shifting the emphasis of dialogue from asking "what one's own particular church can offer other churches" towards questions that consider "what other churches can offer to one's own particular church." Receptive ecumenism advocates a conversion of both individuals and churches engaged in ecumenical dialogue similar to

⁵⁷¹ ARCIC III, "Communique from the Meeting of ARCIC III at Bose" (Communique, Bose, Italy, May 27, 2011).

⁵⁷² Murray, "Arcic III: Recognising the Need for an Ecumenical Gear-Change," 207.

Paul Ricoeur's understanding of the movement from recognition as identification to recognition of one's self, which is described in chapter three.⁵⁷³ Murray contends that in regards to receptive ecumenism "the primary call is to take responsibility for one's own and one's own community's learning in the face of the other, without first demanding that the other does likewise."⁵⁷⁴

Receptive ecumenism rightly acknowledges that particular churches have much to learn from one another and that ecumenism presupposes a willingness and receptivity to learn from one another. Hence, the activities of learning and reception are intrinsically connected to one another. Murray writes:

... Catholic learning is intended to be suggestive of the universal, all-extensive range of the receptive dynamic... Where Receptive Ecumenism expresses this *ad intra* in relation to Christian ecumenism, Catholic learning voices the claim *ad extra* that is an authentically Catholic instinct to ask – with due discernment, criticism, and appropriate concern for integrity intact – after the truth potentially to be learned from the other, whomsoever the other might be.⁵⁷⁵

However, while receptive ecumenism offers a correct diagnosis of the challenges and ills of present-day ecumenism and provides a valuable description of what receptive ecumenism ultimately entails, it lacks an articulation of what "discernment, criticism, and appropriate concern for integrity" involve. Put another way, Receptive ecumenism and ecumenical learning acknowledge the need for a conversion of the narrative disposition of individuals and churches within ecumenical dialogue, but it does not adequately attend to the cognitive conversion that is also required. Receptive ecumenism acknowledges the need to think differently, but it does not address the logic that facilitates and supports thinking differently.

⁵⁷³ See: chapter three pp. 111-114

⁵⁷⁴ Murray, 17.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid.

Without downplaying the importance of receptive ecumenism and ecumenical learning, the lack of systematic and logical coherence of both hinders their effectiveness as complimentary methodological alternatives to traditional methods employed in ecumenical dialogue.⁵⁷⁶ This section argues that the choice of receptive ecumenism and ecumenical learning as methods for furthering the dialogue between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic stand to benefit from the systematic and logical coherence of Rahner's theology of symbol. In particular, Rahner's theology of symbol and its accompanying logic provide the resources for facilitating the necessary narrative and cognitive conversions that are required to deepen and further the ecumenical relationship between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church.

4.1 – The Anglican-Roman Catholic Cognitive and Narrative Impasse

Much of the tension that continues to develop between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion issues from divergent hermeneutical emphases regarding Christian identity and the *koinonia* of Christ's church. As the following demonstrates, the ongoing tensions and disagreements that exist between both communions cannot simply be glossed over nor is there some sort of "hermeneutic key" that promises to identify and subsequently unlock a common understanding that will somehow bridge the present-day interpretative divide and explain away all tensions and disagreements. Instead, it must be soberly acknowledged that the tensions and disagreements that exist between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic

⁵⁷⁶ The lack of systematic coherence is demonstrated by Paul Murray's description of "Receptive Ecumenism's core theological principles" of which he articulates twenty-seven. In no way is this meant as a criticism of the theological quality of the principles Murray establishes; however, its practical application is questionable. Paul Murray, "Families of Receptive Theological Learning: Scriptural Reasoning, Comparative Theology, and Receptive Ecumenism," *Modern Theology* 29, no. 4 (2013): 85-88.

Church are real and in some respects most likely lasting. It is necessary and beneficial to recognize that over the course of their respective histories the different trajectories of the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church have developed cognitive and narrative dispositions in relation to unique sociocultural and intellectual contexts.⁵⁷⁷ The critical questions facing the ecumenical dialogue and relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion can no longer fixate on the distinctions and differences that exist between both communions, but instead must be directed towards questions that consider how realizing a common Christian identity and the *koinonia* of Christ's church can continue with respect to the very real and significant differences and distinctions that have developed and continue to develop.

This section explains that the seemingly unresolvable differences that continue to develop are manifestations of divergent emphases in regards to the cognitive and narrative dispositions of the Anglican Communion and Roman Catholic Church and that these divergent emphases have significant implications for how both communions approach the realities of ecumenical learning and ecumenical reception. In terms of the cognitive disposition, the realities of orthodoxy and orthopraxis and their relationship to one another are central concerns. However, there is a tendency to elevate orthodoxy or orthopraxis as sort of hermeneutic key for interpreting Christian identity and the *koinonia* of the Christ's church. In the case of the Anglican Communion and Roman Catholic Church, there is an inclination to interpret orthodoxy through orthopraxis and orthopraxis through orthodoxy respectively. On the other hand, the narrative disposition tends to

⁵⁷⁷ The term "disposition" is used to characterize the hermeneutical tendencies or affinities of a particular church. The term is used generally and is not meant to suggest that particular churches and members of particular churches are incapable of thinking or acting outside the general dispositions of a church.

recognize Christian identity and the *koinonia* of Christ's church in terms of substantial or formal identity (*idem*) and the dynamic identity of self-constancy (*ipse*) and their relationship to one another.⁵⁷⁸ As with the cognitive disposition, churches have a propensity to elevate one aspect over another; either the *idem* or the *ipse* in the case of the narrative disposition.

The intention of this section is two-fold. Firstly, this section analyzes how the cognitive and narrative dispositions that have developed in the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion evidence both resources and obstacles for furthering the ecumenical dialogue and the ecclesial relationship between the communions. Secondly, this section proposes a symbolic reframing of the narrative and cognitive dispositions of the Anglican Communion and Roman Catholic Church.

4.1.1 – The Ontological Cognitive and Narrative Disposition of the Roman Catholic Church

In terms of its cognitive disposition, the Roman Catholic understanding of Christian identity and the *koinonia* of Christ's church tends to prioritize orthodoxy over orthopraxis. For instance, the social teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, which poignantly illustrate the importance of orthopraxis for Christian identity, are often referred to as its "best kept secret."⁵⁷⁹ This does not mean, however, that the Roman Catholic Church does not take orthopraxis seriously; instead, it is an illustration that the Roman Catholic Church is disposed to an understanding that the orthopraxis of the church is a function of the orthodoxy of the Church. From this vantage point, orthopraxis is informed by and conforms to the orthodoxy of the Church. As such, this cognitive

⁵⁷⁸ See: chapter three pp. 120-124

⁵⁷⁹ See: Edward P. DeBerri, James E. Hug, and Peter J. Henriot, *Catholic Social Teaching: Our Best Kept Secret* (New York: Orbis Books, 2003), 3-5.

disposition resembles a movement from the content of orthodoxy to its lived expression through orthopraxis. Thus, the Roman Catholic Church's cognitive disposition tends to understand and explain the expressive activities of the church via the nature of the church. Put another way, the substantial nature of the church as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic informs the basic and fundamental communicative activities of the church; *diakonia*, *leitourgia*, and *martyria*.

The cognitive disposition of the Roman Catholic Church supports the interpretative movement from orthodoxy to orthopraxis through recourse to ontological and metaphysical patterns of thought. The interpretative movement from orthodoxy to orthopraxis resembles the cognitive pattern of primary reflection, whereby the particularity of Christian living is understood and explained by an appeal to Christian doctrine which is universal. In this way, orthodoxy provides a solid foundation for orthopraxis, but the priority of orthodoxy can also overshadow and neglect the informative role of orthopraxis in interpreting Christian identity and the *koinonia* of Christ's church. "All doctrinal formulations" writes Avery Dulles, "... point beyond themselves to the mystery of God's own truth, which abides in the Church as a living subject. In a certain sense, therefore, even dogmatic declarations cannot be final."⁵⁸⁰ Dulles calls forth the important observation that the orthodoxy of the church, which is often formulated in the form of doctrinal propositions, is also informed by the life of the church. In sum, the cognitive disposition of the Roman Catholic Church evidences a strong movement from orthodoxy to orthopraxis, but tends to place a weaker emphasis on the interpretive movement from orthopraxis to orthodoxy, where orthopraxis informs orthodoxy.

⁵⁸⁰ Dulles, *The Craft of Theology*, 108.

The narrative disposition of the Roman Catholic Church reflects the priority for the *idem*, or the substantial and formal identity of the Church. As such, the Roman Catholic Church demonstrates an affinity for the interpretation of Christian identity and the *koinonia* of Christ's church in such a way that the *ipse*, or the identity of self-constancy through change, of the church is understood to conform to the *idem* of the church. Put another way, the judge or measurement of self-constancy, from a Roman Catholic vantage point, is the substantial unchanging identity of the church.

The Roman Catholic emphasis on the *idem* identity of the church, like the emphasis towards orthodoxy, tends to situate Christian identity and the *koinonia* of Christ's church on the stability of metaphysical and ontological patterns of thought. The *idem* identity of the church is directed towards memory, which is characteristic of the Roman Catholic affinity and emphasis for tradition as continuity with the past. Put another way, the Roman Catholic Church demonstrates a propensity for articulating Christian identity and the *koinonia* of Christ's church in terms of their unchangeable features, structures, and characteristics. Thus, from the vantage point of the Roman Catholic Church there is a proclivity to emphasize the unchangeable nature of the church. The result is an interpretative movement from the *idem* to the *ipse*. The narrative disposition of the Roman Catholic Church is similar to its cognitive disposition in so far as it is characterized by a movement from the marks of the church to the communicative activities of the church.

While the Roman Catholic Church exhibits a preference for the *idem*, one ought not conclude that the *ipse* identity of the church is absent from the Roman Catholic understanding of Christian identity and the *koinonia* of Christ's church. The Roman

Catholic understanding of doctrinal development, the hierarchy of truths, and its history of liturgical reforms, to name only a few, are ample evidence to support the Roman Catholic Church's capacity for "self-constancy" through change. However, it is also evident that, generally speaking, there is stronger and more consistent emphasis *idem* identity. In sum, the narrative disposition of the Roman Catholic Church exhibits a preference for continuity over change.

The cognitive disposition of the Roman Catholic Church, which tends towards orthodoxy, and its narrative disposition, which tends towards the *idem*, cultivate an emphasis on the objective criteria for Christian identity and the *koinonia* of Christ's church. Thus, the nature of the church as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic supports and is logically prior to the expressive activities of *martyria*, *leitourgia*, and *diakonia*. For instance, the unity of the church, which is realized in the celebration of the Eucharist for Roman Catholics, is dependent on the apostolic nature of the church. *Lumen Gentium* reads:

The bishop, invested with the fullness of the sacrament of orders, is the "steward of the grace of the supreme priesthood," above all in the Eucharist, which he himself offers, or ensures it is offered, and by which the church continues to live and grow. The church of Christ is really present in all legitimately organized local groups of faithful which, united with their pastors, are also called churches in the New Testament.⁵⁸¹

As the above acknowledges, the church of Christ is really present in "legitimately" organized communities; a community that in communion with their bishop (apostolic) gathers together in the celebration of the Eucharist (*leitourgia*). However, the legitimacy of a community has objective criteria that, for the Roman Catholic Church, are universal. It is significant to acknowledge that for the Roman Catholic Church legitimacy is

⁵⁸¹ Vatican II, "Lumen Gentium," 36.

indebted to validity and validity is governed by ontology. The legitimacy of a church community entails that it is in communion with a validly ordained bishop who is in communion with the Bishop of Rome. In most instances, a legitimate church community gathers around a validly ordained priest who is in communion with the local bishop and validly celebrates the Eucharist. The above example demonstrates the Roman Catholic affinity for orthodoxy while also demonstrating the Roman Catholic propensity for ensuring the *idem*.

4.1.2 – *The Phenomenological Cognitive and Narrative Disposition of the Anglican Communion*

In terms of its cognitive disposition, the Anglican understanding of Christian identity and the *koinonia* of Christ's church tends to emphasize orthopraxis over orthodoxy. As David Scott acknowledges, "The Church of England, and the churches in communion with it composing the Anglican Communion, is not a confessional church... neither the theology of one leading figure, nor an official doctrinal confession functions as the test of correct doctrine."⁵⁸² This is not to imply that the Anglican Communion is devoid of orthodoxy, but instead suggests that the orthodoxy of the church is informed through the orthopraxis of the church. For instance, the language of the Anglican Communion prefers to speak of the "fundamentals" or "essentials" of faith as opposed to common doctrines. Paul Avis writes:

Both Scripture and tradition are interpreted by means of reason, not in the spirit of the Enlightenment, as an individualistic and analytical instrument, but in a cultural and sapiential sense, as the light of God diffused, albeit imperfectly, through human knowledge and experience and to be exercised humbly, collectively and prayerfully.⁵⁸³

⁵⁸² David Scott, "The Eucharist: An Anglican Perspective," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 13, no. 2 (1976): 224.

⁵⁸³ Avis, *The Identity of Anglicanism : Essentials of Anglican Ecclesiology*, 60.

Hence, it is the lived experience of the church through *leitourgia*, *diakonia*, and *martyria* that take interpretative precedence over the nature of the church insofar as the nature of the church can be expressed in a variety of ways and never perfectly. The Anglican vantage point places a greater emphasis on how Christian identity and the *koinonia* of Christ's church are expressed within the diversity and particularity of churches. Put another way, if the Roman Catholic Church tends to think through orthodoxy, then the Anglican Communion tends to think through orthopraxis. Alan Jones summarizes well an Anglican approach to the relationship between orthodoxy and orthopraxis:

Christian orthodoxy... looks at the world through the prism of the three basic doctrines of incarnation, redemption, and communion. And Christian orthodoxy demands a moral response. Since we can say things falsely, the test of anyone's orthodoxy lies in orthopraxis... in the moral life.⁵⁸⁴

The cognitive disposition of the Anglican Communion supports the interpretative movement from orthodoxy to orthopraxis through recourse to phenomenological patterns of thought. It is in and through the particularity of one's unique socio-cultural and intellectual context that individuals and communities come to experience and bring the Christian message to expression. The priority of orthopraxis in the Anglican Communion supports the rich diversity and plurality of the Anglican Communion; however, the Anglican affinity for orthopraxis tends to be suspicious of orthodoxy, at least in terms of common doctrinal formulas. In *For the Sake of the Kingdom*, The Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission writes:

This unity (of the Anglican Communion) is found, in the first instance, precisely through the continuing fellowship of churches that belong in different places. For Anglicans, such fellowship is based in a common set of institutions: Scriptures, ecumenical creeds, sacraments, the historic threefold ministry. It comes to

⁵⁸⁴ Alan Jones, *Common Prayer on Common Ground: A Vision of Anglican Orthodoxy* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Morehouse Publishing 2006), 20.

practical expression, however, through practical acts of sharing, through mutual consultation, and through mutual admonition and criticism... pluralism can serve the cause of a deeper and fuller understanding of the Gospel and so of a deeper and fuller unity in Christ; but it can do so only on the condition that churches do not eschew their responsibility to one another, a responsibility that includes hearing as well as speaking, learning as well as teaching. And this in turn can only occur, in the Anglican Communion, through a common willingness to take up difficult - even divisive - issues for the sake of the truth of the Gospel. For too long Anglicans have appeared willing to evade responsible theological reflection and dialogue by acquiescing automatically and immediately in the co-existence of incompatible views, opinions, and policies.⁵⁸⁵

The affinity for orthopraxis and phenomenological patterns of thought, as the above warns, risks divulging into relativity. The internal struggles of the Anglican Communion over issues of sexual morality and the ordination of women are examples of the desire to embrace incompatible views within the communion.

In sum, the cognitive disposition of the Anglican Communion evidences a strong inclination for the interpretative movement from orthopraxis to orthodoxy, but tends to place a weaker emphasis on the interpretive movement from orthodoxy to orthopraxis.

The narrative disposition of the Anglican Communion is inclined to interpret Christian identity and the *koinonia* of Christ's church via the *ipse*. As such, the narrative disposition of Anglican Communion tends to affirm the tentative nature of doctrinal formulations of the Christian identity and the *koinonia* of Christ's church with respect to change and development. The Anglican Communion demonstrates an affinity for "promise" insofar as it understands Christian identity and the *koinonia* of Christ's church as being governed by self-constancy. Put another way, Christian identity and the *koinonia* of Christ's church are not ensured by identical structures, common features, or identical characteristics. Instead, *koinonia* and identity are brought to expression in and

⁵⁸⁵ Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission, "For the Sake of the Kingdom," (1986).

through diversity and particularity. As the 1968 Lambeth conference articulates, for the Anglican Communion, “[c]omprehensiveness demands agreement on fundamentals, while tolerating disagreement on matters in which Christians may differ without feeling the necessity of breaking communion.”⁵⁸⁶ In light of the realities of human development and fallibility, the Anglican Communion tends to exhibit a suspicion towards the overemphasizing the *idem* identity of the church.

It is in and through the communicative activities of the church that communities and individuals bring to bear the one church and a common Christian identity. The Anglican Communion demonstrates a tendency to interpret the *idem* by way of the *ipse*. The preference for the *ipse*, however, ought not exclude Anglican recourse to the *idem*. For instance, while not as developed as the Roman Catholic sense of the *idem*, the Anglican Communion holds that the Sacred Scriptures, the ancient creeds, the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist, and the historic episcopate are all fundamental aspects of Christian identity and the *koinonia* of Christ’s church.⁵⁸⁷ In sum, the propensity to elevate the *ipse* supports the notions of comprehensiveness and particularity that have come to characterize the distinctiveness of the Anglican Communion.

4.1.3 – Bridging the Narrative and Cognitive Impasse: The Need for a Symbolic Naïveté

The narrative and cognitive dispositions of both the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church evidence different emphases. The present-day ecumenical log jam between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church issues from the divergent cognitive and narrative dispositions through which both communions interpret and appropriate Christian identity and the *koinonia* of Christ’s church. The Roman

⁵⁸⁶ The Lambeth Conference 1968, (New York: Seabury Press 1968), 140.

⁵⁸⁷ Mark D. Chapman, *Anglican Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 192-193.

Catholic Church's narrative and cognitive dispositions demonstrate a preference for a logic of the one over the many that is supported and developed via metaphysical and ontological categories of thought that advance an interpretation and appropriation of the universal and common structures of Christian identity and *koinonia*. The Anglican Communion's cognitive and narrative dispositions, on the other hand, demonstrate a preference for a logic of the many over the one that is supported and developed via phenomenological patterns of thought that advance an interpretation and appropriation of the comprehensiveness and particularity of Christian identity and *koinonia*. However, both the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion envision the interpretative and appropriative process in terms of recognition as a function of identification. More specifically, the Roman Catholic Church tends to interpret and appropriate Christian identity and *koinonia* in terms of ontological and metaphysical distinctions and synthesis, while the Anglican Communion tends to interpret and appropriate Christian identity and *koinonia* in terms of phenomenological comprehensiveness. Herein lies the basic tension of the ecumenical relationship and the challenge of mutual recognition between the Anglican Communion and Roman Catholic Church.

The Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church both affirm that Christian identity and the *koinonia* of Christ's church are rooted in the ineffable mystery of the triune God. Using the language of previous chapters, both communions insist that Christian identity and *koinonia* are *infinitely knowable*. However, both communions tend to understand, explain, and appropriate mystery by way divergent unilateral movements. The Anglican propensity for the *ipse* and orthopraxis exhibits an openness to the infinite

nature of mystery, but tends to be suspicious of universal claims regarding the knowability of mystery. The Roman Catholic propensity for the *idem* and orthodoxy exhibits an openness to the knowable nature of mystery, but tends to be suspicious of claims regarding the significance of the particularity Christianity. At the risk of oversimplifying the complexities involved in the Anglican-Roman Catholic ecumenical dialogue, the basic criticism Anglicans level against the Roman Catholic Church is that it says too much about Christian identity and *koinonia*, while the basic critique of the Roman Catholic Church leveled against the Anglican Communion is that it doesn't say enough.

It must be conceded that to a certain extent the above critiques are valid. For instance, there is a historical precedence that supports the claim that the Roman Catholic Church has, at times, treated the mystery of Christian identity and *koinoina* as a problem.⁵⁸⁸ Likewise, the present-day divisions and tensions within the Anglican Communion give credence to the claim that the Anglican Communion avoids the necessity of common claims regarding the mystery of Christian identity and *koinonia*.⁵⁸⁹ In a positive sense, however, both the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church have a great deal to learn and receive from one another, but, in order for ecumenical learning and ecumenical reception to occur, both the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church must first establish the cognitive and narrative space for ecumenical learning and reception. The development of dialogue as the means for reception and learning necessitates the capacity to hear again in a way that extends

⁵⁸⁸ See: Edward Schillebeeckx, *Church : The Human Story of God* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), xiii-xix.

⁵⁸⁹ See: Stephen W. Bp Sykes, "Anglicanism and the Anglican Doctrine of the Church," *Anglican Theological Review* 10 (1988).

beyond identification. As such, there is a need to move beyond the resources of criticism towards a postcritical and symbolic naïveté.

4.1.4 – A Symbolic Cognitive and Narrative Disposition

The task of this section is to articulate the basic contours of a symbolic cognitive disposition and a symbolic narrative disposition. In regards to Christianity, a symbolic cognitive disposition and symbolic narrative disposition take as their point of departure two fundamental principles. Firstly, the *koinonia* of Christ's church and Christian identity are rooted and tend towards God's mystery. Secondly, as symbols of the mystery of God, Christian identity and the *koinonia* of Church are brought to cognitive and narrative expression by particular churches through the dialogical movement between orthodoxy and orthopraxis on the cognitive level and the dialogical movement between *idem* and the *ipse* on the narrative level.

Symbols give rise to thought and symbols also "speak". As such a symbolic disposition is at once a cognitive disposition and a narrative disposition. The interpretation and appropriation of Christian identity and *koinonia*, from an ecumenical vantage point, necessitates a narrative disposition and a cognitive disposition that is governed by a logic that is neither exclusively ontological nor exclusively phenomenological; instead, it requires the capacity to integrate both dispositions into one's own and one's own community's thinking and narrative. The following argues that Karl Rahner's theology of symbol provides the necessary resources for the development of both a cognitive disposition and a narrative disposition that integrates both the ontological disposition of the Roman Catholic Church and the phenomenological disposition of the Anglican Communion.

4.1.4.1 – A Symbolic Cognitive Disposition

Neither Christian identity nor *koinonia* are in “possession” of God’s mystery. It is the mystery of God that possesses Christian identity and *koinonia* as its own other, whereby in and through the concrete circumstances of the church, the mystery of God attains and communicates itself in knowledge and love through a Christian identity that is one, holy, catholic, apostolic and through the shared activities of *leitourgia*, *diakonia*, and *martyria*. Thus, a symbolic cognitive disposition does not begin by identifying the very real tensions and differences that exist between Christians; instead, a symbolic cognitive disposition starts from the conviction that there is already *koinonia* that exists among all Christians in so far as all Christians share a common identity with God’s mystery.

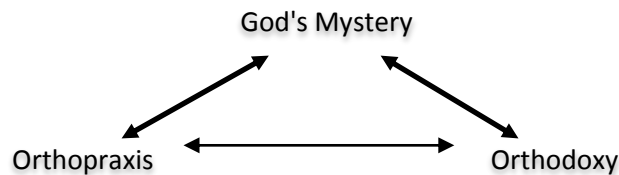
A symbolic cognitive disposition acknowledges that Christian belief and Christian activity exist within a relationship governed by emanation and return. As such, there is a symbolic structure to orthodoxy and orthopraxis insofar as both are expressions that originate out of the ineffable mystery of God and seek to return to the very same origin. Thus, it is through orthodoxy and orthopraxis that the fundamental mysteries of Christianity enter the cognitive horizon of human thought and experience.

While distinct from divine revelation, the relationship between orthodoxy and orthopraxis is similar in structure to divine revelation. *Dei Verbum* rightly acknowledges that:

The pattern of this revelation unfolds through words and deeds which are intrinsically connected: the works performed by God in the history of salvation show forth and confirm the doctrine and realities signified by the words; the words, for their part, proclaim the works, and bring to light the mystery they proclaim. The most intimate truth thus revealed about God and human salvation

shines forth for us in Christ, who is himself both the mediator and the sum total of revelation.⁵⁹⁰

In an analogous manner, orthodoxy and orthopraxis, as contemporaneous expressions of God's mystery, are intrinsically connected in such a way that Christian orthopraxis confirms the mystery of Christian belief and Christian orthodoxy proclaims the mystery of Christian action. Christian orthodoxy and orthopraxis must be interpreted in terms of a vertical symbolic relationship to God's mystery as well as a horizontal symbolic relationship to one another. Hence, a symbolic cognitive disposition envisions orthodoxy and orthopraxis as distinct symbols of God's mystery that between themselves form symbolic relationship of unity-in-difference. The vertical and horizontal dimensions of Christian identity can be illustrated in the following diagram:



A symbolic cognitive disposition acknowledges that phenomenologically Christian identity and *koinonia* “looks” different from one particular church to another. However, it also acknowledges that ontologically Christian identity and *koinonia* cannot “be” other than symbolic expressions of God's mystery. As such, the symbolic cognitive disposition attends to the symbolic relationship between orthodoxy and orthopraxis in light of Revelation. Put another way, a symbolic cognitive approach does not attend exclusively to the realities of orthodoxy and orthopraxis in themselves; it also attends to

⁵⁹⁰ Vatican II, "Dei Verbum," 98.

the symbolic *movement* of emanation and return that governs the symbolic process.

Hence, a symbolic cognitive disposition interprets and appropriates Christian identity and *koinonia* within the tension of emanation and return without seeking to dissolve or manage them.

Attention to the vertical dimension affirms that all Christians share a common relationship to God's ineffable mystery. It is on the horizontal level and in terms of orthodoxy and orthopraxis and their relationship to one another that disagreements emerge between particular churches. It is how churches think about and articulate God's mystery on the level of orthodoxy and orthopraxis within their particularity that seemingly irresolvable differences develop.

In sum, firstly, a symbolic cognitive disposition acknowledges that the differences between churches are real. Churches not only look different, but they are different in terms of their orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Secondly, a symbolic cognitive disposition acknowledges that the symbolic expressions of orthodoxy and orthopraxy of other churches are not the symbolic expressions of one's own church; they do not belong to the network of symbols of one's own church. Thirdly, a symbolic cognitive disposition acknowledges the need for a temporary suspension of the judgment of the orthodoxy and orthopraxy of other churches. Lastly, the cognitive space for reception of the other's symbolic expression is opened insofar as one's church acknowledges that despite identifiable differences, the symbolic expressions of other churches are real symbols of God's mystery and as such give rise to thought in a manner that possibly extends beyond the boundaries of the cognitive awareness of one's church. In other words it is "this

detour through other”, writes Riccardo Larini, “[that] leads us to question ourselves and deepen our own self-understanding.”⁵⁹¹

4.1.4.2 – A Symbolic Narrative Disposition

Symbols not only give rise to thought; symbols also “speak.” As chapter three describes, symbols arise out of a complex relationship between literal meaning and symbolic meaning, whereby, both meanings are brought to bear upon a symbol.⁵⁹² It is at the narrative level that appropriation, or reception actually takes place. The task of this section is to articulate the basic characteristics of a symbolic narrative disposition. This section accomplishes the task of developing a symbolic narrative disposition by applying Rahner’s insights regarding the distinction between a “real symbol” and a “mere sign” to Paul Ricoeur’s notion of the *idem* and the *ipse*.

Rahner maintains that the boundary between “real symbols” and “mere signs” is fluid because to some extent both are bound up within the socio-cultural milieu of particular time and place. C. Annice Callahan distinguishes signs and symbols when she writes:

An arbitrary sign does not constitute what it signifies and it is separate from what it signifies. It is chosen at random to express a reality in time and space, whereas a real symbol expresses intrinsically the reality it signifies. Furthermore, symbols can change to “mere signs,” like the wedding ring of a divorced person. For Rahner, a symbol renders another reality present. It is the way a being comes to be known. Being is and comes to be by being uttering itself in what is other than itself. The symbolic nature of being means that it gives itself away into the “other,” and finds itself in knowledge and love. This movement of giving oneself

⁵⁹¹ Riccardo Larini, “Texts and Contexts: Hermeneutical Reflections on Receptive Ecumenism,” in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning : Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. P. D. Murray and Luca Badini Confalonieri (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 94.

⁵⁹² See: chapter three pp.122-124

away and finding oneself presupposes that being expresses itself and possesses itself.⁵⁹³

As Callahan articulates, the theoretical distinction between signs and symbols is clear, but practically speaking the boundary between signs and symbols is more difficult to articulate. What is evident however, is that signs and symbols are distinguished from one another by their respective relationships between one reality and another. In the case of a sign, the relationship between two realities is relatively weak or arbitrary. However, in the case of the symbol two realities are intrinsically related. The distinction between a sign and a symbol is more clearly articulated when one attends to the possibility of how a symbol can become a sign or a sign a symbol.

The distinction between a sign and a symbol is evidenced by their respective relationships to mystery. A symbol carries and expresses mystery, while a sign does not. Hence, signs are arbitrary in so far as they are literally designated to represent a reality. Signs do not carry or express mystery. For instance, a “stop” sign literally points to the reality to stop. It does not express nor is it intended to express the mystery of human experience. Hence, signs are given their meaning. Symbols on the other hand arise out of the fabric of human experience in such a way that they carry and express the mystery of human existence. To use the example of the wedding ring offered by Callahan, the ring carries with it the mysterious reality of a shared life. It draws together the past, present, and future of human experience. The ring is not itself the lived experience, but points to the lived experience and to a certain extent the mystery present. A wedding ring of a divorced person, however, points to a reality that is no longer present. Hence, in a certain sense, signs are dead symbols.

⁵⁹³ C. Annice Callahan, "Karl Rahner's Theology of Symbol: Basis for His Theology of the Church and the Sacraments," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 49, no. 3 (1982): 196.

All symbols are signs in far as they “point to” or “indicate” a reality other than itself. However, symbols extend beyond being mere signs insofar as they make another reality present. Hence, in order for a symbol to speak in an efficacious manner it requires that there is an intrinsic relationship between the literal meaning of the sign and the mysterious meaning of the other.

In terms of the *idem* and *ipse*, the *idem* is akin to the literal meaning of symbol and the *ipse* is akin to the symbolic or mysterious meaning of a symbol. Hence, the expressive nature of the symbol is bound up in the relationship of the *idem* and the *ipse*. Put another way, symbols require the constancy of appearance of the *idem* and the dynamism of the *ipse*. Without the *ipse*, symbols divulge into signs, and without the *idem* symbols lack the constancy needed for expression.

4.2 – Anglican-Roman Catholic Ecumenical Dialogue: Dispositional Conversion

As the above suggests, the ecumenical impasse between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion is rooted in divergent cognitive and narrative dispositions. Simply put, the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church think and act differently in many respects. The cognitive and narrative divide between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church hinders the capacity of both communions to receive one another as expressions of God’s mystery and ultimately threatens the possibility of mutual recognition. Karl Rahner acknowledges that the disconnect between orthodoxy and orthopraxis is one of the greatest challenges that confronts ecumenical activity between churches when he writes that:

... contemporary Christianity is not just theoretically known but practically lived. Here lies our greatest deficiency. If Christians not only thought their truth but lived it, if they were as concerned for orthopraxis as for orthodoxy, if this orthopraxis meant not only social criticism and social change... but worshipping

God in spirit and in truth, since we exist for God and not God for us, then they would soon be able to agree about controversial theological questions that, like it or not, no longer have the same importance as at the time of the Reformation.⁵⁹⁴

Properly framed, the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church have much to offer one another in terms of Christian identity and the *koinonia* of Christ's church.

The tensions that surround the ecumenical relationship between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church are found at the intersection of orthodoxy and orthopraxis. It is at this intersection that seemingly unresolvable disagreements agonizingly appear. The issues surrounding the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate and the role of the bishop of Rome, for instance, are interpreted from different vantage points. For its part, the Anglican Communion's decision to ordain women is informed by orthopraxis, while the Roman Catholic opposition to the ordination of women is informed by orthodoxy. Put simply, the orthopraxis of the Anglican Communion shapes its orthodoxy and the orthodoxy of the Roman Catholic Church shapes its orthopraxis. As the 1968 Malta Report recognizes, "[d]ivergences since the sixteenth century have arisen not so much from the substance of this inheritance [liturgy, theology, spirituality, church order, and mission] as from our separate ways of receiving it."⁵⁹⁵ ARCIC I addresses the issue of reception in its *Elucidation* to the 1976 *Venice Statement*. The commission writes:

By 'reception' we mean the fact that the people of God acknowledge a decision or statement because they recognize in it the apostolic faith. They accept it because they discern a harmony between what is proposed to them and the *sensus fidelium* of the whole Church. As an example, the creed that we call Nicene has been received by the Church because in it the Church has recognized the apostolic faith. Reception does not create nor legitimize the decision: it is the final

⁵⁹⁴ Rahner, "Ecumenical Togetherness Today," 86-87.

⁵⁹⁵ Anglican-Roman Catholic Preparatory Commission, "The Malta Report (1968)," in *Growth in Agreement: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level*, ed. H. Meyer and L. Vischer (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), 121.

indication that such a decision has fulfilled the necessary conditions for it to be a true expression of the faith. In this acceptance the whole Church is involved in a continuous process of discernment and response.⁵⁹⁶

The ecumenical dialogue between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church has been dominated by methods identification for achieving mutual recognition and in so doing presents significant challenges for reception.

As Paul Ricoeur demonstrates, the path towards mutual recognition must pass from recognition as identification to recognition of one's-self before mutual recognition can be achieved. Therefore, if mutual recognition is to be reality and possibility for the Anglican Communion the Roman Catholic Church, both communions must 1) move beyond dialogue that is governed by methods of identification, 2) develop a cognitive and narrative disposition that allows for the reception of one another as expressions of God's mystery, and 3) acknowledge that one's own church "becomes" a fuller expression of God's mystery when in freedom and responsibility it learns from one another. Put simply, the ecumenical relationship between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church is need of second naïveté. As such, a second naïveté requires a symbolic approach to ecumenical dialogue that challenges the narrative and cognitive dispositions of both the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion. In particular, a symbolic narrative and cognitive disposition challenges the Roman Catholic Church to attend more fully to the phenomenological dimensions of Christian belief and life and Challenges the Anglican Communion to attend more fully to the ontological dimensions of Christian life and belief.

4.2.1 – Ecumenical Dialogue Beyond Identification: The Ordination of Women, Apostolic Succession, and the Bishop of Rome

⁵⁹⁶ Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, "Final Report (1981)," 102.

As a final step in demonstrating the import of a symbolic approach for the ecumenical dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion, this section takes up the ecumenically contentious issues of the ordination of women, apostolic succession, the Bishop of Rome. The intention of this section is develop a path for ecumenical dialogue in relation to the principles of the cognitive and narrative dispositions developed in this chapter.

The issue of the ordination of women, which is presently dividing the two communions, is an example where, despite the obvious divergent positions of the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church, there is room for fruitful dialogue that has, unfortunately, been overshadowed by the polemical discourse. As the following suggests, the Roman Catholic ontological narrative and cognitive disposition provides good reasons for its prohibition of the ordination of women. On the other hand, the phenomenological narrative and cognitive disposition of the Anglican Communion provides good reasons as to why women should be ordained. Sara Butler writes:

The two different approaches [to the ordination of women] are these: the one- which I shall refer to as “Anglican” – proceeds by way of theological reasoning, and has its base in a renewed theological anthropology; the other “Roman Catholic” – proceeds by appeal to the will of Christ revealed in history and confirmed in the experience of the Church.⁵⁹⁷

In relation to the their respective cognitive and narrative dispositions the Roman Catholic Church’s argument is thin theologically speaking, but gains support in terms of the data available in regards to revelation and the tradition of the church, while the Anglican argument, on the other hand, has less evident precedents in revelation and tradition, but is theologically compelling.

⁵⁹⁷ Sara Butler, "The Ordination of Women : A New Obstacle to the Recognition of Anglican Orders," *Anglican Theological Review* 78, no. 1 (1996): 99.

The controversy surrounding the ordination of women has been a part of the ecumenical relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion since official dialogues commenced with ARCIC I. The ordination of women by churches of the Anglican Communion, which gained momentum in the 1970's, reconfigured the ecumenical landscape of between Roman Catholics and Anglicans, especially in regards to the hope of mutual recognition of ministries between the communions.

In 1975, Paul VI wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Donald Coggan, outlining the Roman Catholic position on the ordination of women. He writes:

She [Roman Catholic Church] holds that it is not admissible to ordain women to the priesthood, for very fundamental reasons. These reasons include: the example recorded in the Sacred Scriptures of Christ choosing his Apostles only from among men; the constant practice of the Church, which has imitated Christ in choosing only men; and her living teaching authority which has consistently held that the exclusion of women of women from the priesthood is in accordance with God's plan for his Church.⁵⁹⁸

Accordingly, the position of the Roman Catholic Church maintains that there is nothing to support the ordination of women in either the Scriptural witness or the tradition of the church. The basic logic developed by Paul VI in his letter to Archbishop Coggan was further developed in 1977 by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's *Inter insigniores* (*Declaration on the Question of Admission to the Ministerial Priesthood*). *Inter Insigniores* cites three basic principles in support of the exclusion of women from the ministerial priesthood: 1) The church's constant tradition, whereby, "The Catholic Church has never felt that priestly or episcopal ordination can be validly conferred on

⁵⁹⁸ Paul IV, "Letter from Paul VI to Archbishop Coggan, November 23, 1975," in *Doing the Truth in Charity* ed. Thomas F. Stransky (New York: Paulist Press, 1975), 260.

women.”⁵⁹⁹, 2) the attitude of Christ, insofar as “Jesus Christ did not call any women to become part of the Twelve.”⁶⁰⁰, and 3) the practice of the apostles in which “The apostolic community remained faithful to the attitude of Jesus towards women.”⁶⁰¹ Finally, in 1994, John Paul II issued an apostolic letter on the reserving the ordination to priesthood only to men, *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*. The letter reaffirms the principles set forth by Paul VI and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, but with added authority and decisiveness. John Paul II closes with the statement “I declare that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church's faithful.”⁶⁰²

As the above demonstrates the Roman Catholic Church's approach to the issue of the ordination of women is in keeping with an ontological cognitive and narrative disposition as it outlines above. The hermeneutical tendency to understand and explain Christian identity and *koinonia* through the church's memory and orthodoxy subsequently informs how the church brings itself to expression amidst changing circumstances. In the case of the ordination of women, the Roman Catholic Church confronts the challenges posed by the changing roles of women in society with an understanding of the priesthood that takes recourse to doctrine and tradition as basic norms. Thus, the ordination of women offends Christian identity as it is established by tradition and the *koinonia* of Christ's church.

The Anglican approach to the ordination of women is markedly different from that of Roman Catholicism. Firstly, questions regarding the ordination of women

⁵⁹⁹ Louis Ligier, "On the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood," *Origins* 7, no. 44 (1978): ¶ 1.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid., ¶ 2.

⁶⁰¹ Ibid., ¶ 3.

⁶⁰² John Paul II, "Ordinatio Sacerdotalis," *Origins* 24, no. 4 (1994): ¶ 4.

surfaced within the Anglican Communion at the turn of the twentieth century. Anglican theological reflection on the matter officially developed with respect to the following considerations 1) an appeal scripture and tradition, 2) the seemingly divided information scripture provides, and 3) the flawed biological assumptions of the church father and medieval theologians regarding the nature of woman.⁶⁰³ Paul Avis provides a succinct description of the Anglican approach to the ordination of women. He writes:

Ultimately,... the ordination of women to the priesthood is an ecclesiological matter which must be justified in term of the fullness of Christ in all the baptized members of his body. Because Anglicanism is a reformed as well as a catholic expression of the Christian Church, it knows that theological arguments that make a case for the reform of the ministry need to be considered candidly and in their merits, and they cannot be simply vetoed by the weight of tradition. Anglicanism is 'catholic and reformed' and the imperative of reform applies to the structures of the ordained ministry, as much as to other areas of the Church's life.⁶⁰⁴

The Anglican approach to the issue of the ordination of women is consistent with the phenomenological narrative and cognitive disposition that tends towards orthopraxis and the *ipse*. The Anglican position is not a rejection of the tradition of the church, but understands and explains the living tradition through phenomenological encounter with the world. As such, Anglicans have good theological reasons for admitting women to the priesthood insofar as women are an intrinsic part of the church that brings God's mystery to expression in Christian identity and the *koinonia* of Christ's church.

The ecumenical impasse regarding the ordination of women, is certainly a significant obstacle confronting the relationship between Anglicans and Roman Catholics. However, despite its significance, from the perspective of a symbolic cognitive and narrative disposition, the differing conclusions have been exaggerated to

⁶⁰³ Butler, "The Ordination of Women : A New Obstacle to the Recognition of Anglican Orders," 98.

⁶⁰⁴ Avis, *The Identity of Anglicanism : Essentials of Anglican Ecclesiology*, 133.

some extent by both communions internally, but largely ignored externally. For instance, both the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church support their respective conclusions over and against the conclusion of the other. However, in terms of the official dialogues that have taken place, the issue is largely ignored except in passing or by way of descriptive references to the positions of both communions. In short, the ordination of women has been discussed at length within both communions, but the respective positions of both communions have not been brought to dialogue.

It is apparent that, in regards to the practice of ordaining or not ordaining women, both the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church engage one another at the level of identification. To be clear, a symbolic narrative and cognitive disposition is not suspicious of ontological and phenomenological identification *per se*; it is, however, suspicious of exaggerations made in light of these dispositions. Hence, one ought not conclude that a symbolic cognitive and narrative disposition does not acknowledge that the Roman Catholic prohibition of women's ordination and the Anglican opening of ordination to women are mutually exclusive positions.

Unlike the ordination of women, the last two issues, apostolic succession and the Bishop of Rome, have been addressed at length by ARCIC I and ARCIC II. While the methods of identification have uncovered a certain amount of convergence, the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church evidence divergent understandings and explanations of Apostolic Succession and more so in the case of role of the bishop of Rome. It is not surprising that both apostolic succession and the bishop of Rome are taken up at length in the documents of ARCIC I and ARCIC II as both issues are deeply entrenched in historical development. Both Anglicans and Roman Catholics agree that

apostolic succession and the role of the bishop of Rome have been interpreted differently throughout Christian history and as such, these issues are amenable to traditional methods of identification used in ecumenical dialogue. However, the space devoted to apostolic succession and the bishop of Rome is also a bit surprising given that issues such as the ordination of women are practically more divisive in terms of mutual recognition.

Apostolic succession has been at the center of the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion from the very beginning of the English Reformation and became immensely complicated with Leo XIII's judgment in 1896 that Anglican orders are absolutely null and void.

The official Roman Catholic interpretation of Anglican orders and apostolic succession within the Anglican Communion is deeply wedded to an ontological understanding of orders and apostolic succession that is characteristic of an ontological/metaphysical cognitive and narrative disposition. *Lumen Gentium* reads:

...the apostles were endowed by Christ with a special outpouring of the holy Spirit coming upon them (See Acts 1:8; 2:4; Jn 20:22-23), and, by the imposition of hands (see 1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6-7) they passed on to their collaborators the gift of the holy Spirit, which is transmitted to our day through episcopal consecration. The Holy synod teaches, moreover, that the fullness of the sacrament of Orders is conferred by episcopal consecration, and both in the liturgical tradition of the church and in the language of the Fathers of the church it is called the high priesthood, the summit of the sacred ministry. Episcopal consecration confers, together with the office of sanctifying, the offices also of teaching and ruling, which, however, of their very nature can be exercised only in hierarchical communion with the head and members of the college.⁶⁰⁵

According to Vatican II, there is an identity between apostolic succession and episcopal succession whereby, episcopal consecration confers on the bishop the offices of sanctifying, teaching, and ruling. However, the office of the bishop is also dependent on a variety of relationships. The bishop exercises his office in relation to the bishop of

⁶⁰⁵ Vatican II, "Lumen Gentium," ¶ 21.

Rome and those who are in communion with the bishop of Rome. Practically speaking, the bishop cannot sanctify, govern, or teach in isolation. However, *Lumen Gentium* continues, “Tradition... makes it abundantly clear that, through the imposition of hands and the words of consecration, the grace of the holy Spirit is given and a sacred character is impressed in such a way that bishops, immanently and visibly, take the place of Christ himself...”⁶⁰⁶ Thus, *Lumen Gentium* affirms that apostolic succession is not guaranteed only by episcopal consecration, but also the relationship of a bishop to the college of bishops. What is significant, however, is that the relationship of a bishop to the college of bishops, from a Roman Catholic perspective, is formed by the episcopal consecration which is governed by the laying on of hands (matter) and the words of consecration (form). In short, ontology establishes the relationship of bishops to one another. In this sense, the Roman Catholic understanding of apostolic succession and its significance is in keeping with its tendency to situate the unity and identity of the church from the vantage point of the *idem* and orthodoxy.

The Anglican understanding of apostolic succession is guided by its phenomenological cognitive and narrative disposition, whereby, episcopal ordination is first placed within the context of the community and thus takes recourse to the *ipse* orthopraxis. *The Porvoo Statement* (1993) reads:

... the primary manifestation of apostolic succession is to be found in the apostolic tradition of the Church as a whole. The succession is an expression of the permanence and, therefore, of the continuity of Christ’s own mission in which the Church participates.⁶⁰⁷

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁷ *The Porvoo Common Statement: Text Agreed at the Fourth Plenary Meeting, Held at Järvenpää, Finland, 9-13 October 1992* (London: Council for Christian Unity of the General Synod of the Church of England, 1993), ¶ 39.

From an Anglican perspective, apostolic succession arises out the apostolicity of the entire church community. Hence it is the apostolic succession of the community that provides for context of the succession in terms of ordained ministry. *The Porvoo*

Statement (1993) continues:

Within the apostolicity of the whole Church is an apostolic succession of ministry which serves and is a focus of the continuity of the Church in its life and its faithfulness to the words and acts of Jesus transmitted by the apostles. The ordained ministry has a particular responsibility for witnessing to this tradition and for proclaiming it afresh with authority in every generation.⁶⁰⁸

From an Anglican perspective, apostolic succession in terms of the ordained ministry *an* aspect of the apostolicity of the church and only makes sense in relationship to unifying fundamentals of the church outlined in the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral. These fundamentals include: 1) “The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as "containing all things necessary to salvation," and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.”⁶⁰⁹; 2) “The Apostles' Creed, as the Baptismal Symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.”⁶¹⁰; 3) “The two Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself - Baptism and the Supper of the Lord - ministered with unfailing use of Christ's words of Institution, and of the elements ordained by Him.”⁶¹¹; 4) “The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the Unity of His Church.”⁶¹²

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid., ¶ 40.

⁶⁰⁹ The Episcopal Church, *The Book of Common Prayer* (1979) (New York: HarperOne, 1983), 877.

⁶¹⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹¹ Ibid., 878.

⁶¹² Ibid.

A symbolic narrative and cognitive disposition acknowledges the limits of ontology, which is central to Leo XIII's judgment as well as the limits of the diversity of expression that accompanies the Anglican understanding of apostolic succession. A symbolic approach acknowledges that Leo XIII's judgment rests squarely on ontology in regards to matter, form, and intention. However, a symbolic approach also acknowledges that the apostolic nature of the church is not simply transmitted ontologically. If this in fact were the case, it would be difficult if not impossible to verify the validity of any bishop given that the early church does not evidence an attentiveness to matter, form, and intention. Put simply, a symbolic approach rightly asks whether or not apostolic succession cannot be governed exclusively by ontology. In this vein, Heinrich Fries contends that it is appropriate to distinguish between "apostolic succession" and "episcopal succession." Fries writes:

...the apostolic succession in the office of the bishop is a *sign* of the apostolicity of the church, not apostolicity itself. Nor is it therefore an automatically effective guarantee. History demonstrates how bishops can fall out of apostolic succession – for example, at the time of the Arian controversies, where it is not exactly certain that the bishops represented correct teaching. This impression is strengthened when one considers the viewpoints and conditions under which bishops were appointed during the Middle ages.⁶¹³

Of course, the distinction between apostolic succession and episcopal succession does not entail a complete disconnect between the two. It does, however, acknowledge that apostolic succession can and should be understood in a broader sense. Hence, "[s]uccession in the office of bishop is *one* sign of the apostolic succession, one sign among others."⁶¹⁴ Episcopal succession is *a* way in which the apostolicity of the church is brought to expression; albeit a particularly significant and essential one. However, the

⁶¹³ Fries and Rahner, *Unity of the Churches: An Actual Possibility*, 99.

⁶¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 100.

apostolicity of the church is also intimately bound to the proclamation of scripture, worship, and service all of which are intrinsically related to the bishop, but not in such a way that they are *de facto* null and void in the absence of an ontologically invalid bishop. In particular, the dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox has provided important ecumenical insights regarding the relationship of unity-in-difference that characterizes episcopal succession and apostolic succession. The 1986 U.S. Theological Consultation affirms the priority of the church's apostolicity in terms of its fidelity to the proclamation and witness of the apostles and warns of reducing the apostolicity of the church to "forms and institutional structures." The Consultation writes, "[a]postolicity is experienced not in atemporal isolation but rather in the Church's social nature as a community of faith and in its historical continuity and permanence..."⁶¹⁵ Hence, while a proper interpretation of the apostolicity of the church rightly gives priority to the proclamation and mission of the apostles, the church, nevertheless, remains a concrete historical reality through which the proclamation and mission of the apostles is manifest.

An example of approaching apostolic succession from a symbolic cognitive and narrative disposition occurred on November 21, 2009. Pope Benedict XVI presented the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, with a pectoral cross, a symbol of the office of the bishop. Undoubtedly, the gesture was not intended to overturn Leo XIII's judgment, but it was an action that undeniably acknowledged the limits of ontological

⁶¹⁵ U.S. Theological Consultation, "Apostolicity as God's Gift in the Life of the Church," in *The Quest for Unity: Orthodox and Catholics in Dialogue : Documents of the Joint International Commission and Official Dialogues in the United States, 1965-1995*, ed. J. Borelli and J.H. Erickson (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996), ¶ 10.

recognition. It is gestures such as Benedict XVI's gift of the pectoral cross that are characteristic of a symbolic cognitive and narrative disposition.

The final issue this section addresses is the role of the bishop of Rome. As chapter four demonstrates, the rupture that occurred between Rome and the Anglican Church during the reign of Henry VIII was extraordinarily complicated. However, despite the complexities that surround schism between England and Rome, it is evident that the issue of papal jurisdiction was an important factor. However, since the time of English reformation issues surrounding the role of the bishop of Rome have occupied a controversial and often polemical space within the ecumenical relationship between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church. The ecumenical issues regarding the role of bishop of Rome are particularly pronounced in light of Vatican I where the Roman Catholic Church affirmed that primacy of the bishop of the Rome is not only one of honor but by divine right (*de iure divino*).⁶¹⁶ According to Vatican I, the primacy of the bishop of Rome is characterized by universal jurisdiction, but this primacy also extends to primacy of judgment, and in certain cases the exercise of the infallible magisterium of the church.

The Roman Catholic understanding of papal primacy is characteristic of the ontological narrative and cognitive disposition to which it tends. The Roman Catholic

⁶¹⁶ Vatican I affirms, "[s]ince the Roman pontiff, by divine right of the apostolic primacy, governs the whole church, we likewise teach and declare that he is the supreme judge of the faithful, and that in all cases which fall under ecclesial jurisdiction recourse may be had to his judgment. The sentence of the apostolic see (than which there is no higher authority) is not subject to revision by anyone, nor may anyone lawfully pass judgment thereupon. And so they stray from the genuine path of truth who maintain that it is lawful to appeal from the judgments of the Roman pontiffs to an ecumenical council as if this were an authority superior to the Roman pontiff. Vatican I, "First Dogmatic Constitution on The Church," in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils: Trent to Vatican II*, ed. Noram P. Tanner (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 814.

interpretation of papal primacy is a particularly poignant example of the Roman Catholic propensity for interpreting the *koinonia* of the church and Christian identity via a logic of the one over the many. Put simply, from a Roman Catholic perspective the role of the bishop of Rome is at the service of unity, but in such a way as to resolve difference.

The Anglican narrative and cognitive disposition, however, is not surprisingly ill at ease with the Roman Catholic interpretation of the bishop of Rome's primacy. Accordingly, the primacy of the bishop of Rome is one that is understood to be in service to the unity of the church. Put simply, the role of the bishop of Rome emerges out of the unity church, not the other way around. Derick Allen and Macdonald Allchin articulate the role of the bishop of Rome within the context of collegiality when they write:

...the primacy of Peter can never be properly understood, nor exercised fully according to God's will, unless it is seen as a primacy within a college, a centre of unity at the service of a diversity of gifts and operations, which does not suppress but encourages their growth. Where the centre tends, as it were, to monopolise the action of Christ and the Spirit in the Church, then the whole structure of the Church's life is imperilled and the delicate balance of its different organs is upset.⁶¹⁷

As Allen and Allchin observe, from an Anglican perspective primacy is at the service of diversity.

The divergent emphases of the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church regarding the primacy of the bishop of Rome, unity at the service of diversity in the case of the former and unity over difference in the case of the latter, need not be understood as mutually exclusive interpretations. The symbolic complementarity of the Anglican and Roman Catholic positions on primacy are masterfully articulated in the ARCIC II document *The Gift of Authority* (1998):

⁶¹⁷ Derek William Allen and A. M. Allchin, "Primacy and Collegiality: An Anglican View," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 2, no. 1 (1965): 79.

We envisage a primacy that will even now help to uphold the legitimate diversity of traditions, strengthening and safeguarding them in fidelity to the gospel. It will encourage that churches in their mission. This sort of primacy will already assist the church on earth to be the authentic catholic *koinonia* in which unity does not curtail diversity, and diversity does not endanger, but enhances unity. It will be an effective sign for all Christians as to how this gift of God builds up that unity for which Christ prayed.⁶¹⁸

The above places the Fries Rahner proposals on the role of bishop of Rome discussed in chapter three within a symbolic context.⁶¹⁹ Simply put, primacy in an ecumenical context, ought to be both unifying and diversifying. Hence, as the Fries and Rahner proposal articulates, the capacity of the bishop of Rome to teach *ex cathedra* in an ecumenical context must be governed by new principles of collegiality whereby the use of such teaching authority is limited to ecumenical councils and consultation with the larger Christian community of ecumenical churches.

In sum, a symbolic narrative and cognitive disposition have the potential to reframe the ecumenical relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion in a manner that is bound exclusively to an ontological narrative or phenomenological narrative and cognitive disposition.

Firstly, a symbolic narrative and cognitive disposition acknowledges that every church despite all the shortcomings and strengths brings God's mystery to expression. Hence, the churches of the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church must acknowledge from the outset of ecumenical engagement that there is a potential for learning and reception from one another. The divergent positions regarding the ordination of women, apostolic succession, the role of the bishop of Rome within the *koinonia* of the church are not exceptions to the possibility of ecumenical reception and

⁶¹⁸ Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, "The Gift of Authority: Authority in the Church III (1998)," ¶ 60.

⁶¹⁹ See: chapter three pp. 163-165

learning. However, the acknowledgement that reception and learning are possible does not negate the real differences and disagreements that exist.

Secondly, a symbolic disposition necessitates that churches honestly identify their differences and disagreements. In the case of women's ordination, the positions of the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church not only *appear* to be different on a phenomenological; they *are* different at the level of ontology. Hence, it is imperative that Anglicans acknowledge that the prohibition of women to the priesthood does not belong to their expressed belief and activity while on the other hand, it Roman Catholics must acknowledge that the opening of the priesthood to women does not belong to their expressed belief and activity.⁶²⁰

Thirdly, within difference, a symbolic disposition seeks to discover the mystery of God as it is expressed by *in* the difference of the other. Hence, difference, does not imply *de facto* that the position of the other is "utterly null and void" nor does it overlook difference and disagreement as realities that one must simply tolerate. Without the necessity of fully accepting the belief and practice of the other, a symbolic narrative and cognitive disposition, insofar as it acknowledges that both orthodoxy and orthopraxis are expressions of God's mystery seeks to enter the space between the exaggerated claims that emerge at the poles of orthodoxy and orthopraxis. For instance, the Anglican tendency to subordinate orthodoxy to orthopraxis calls attention to the importance of women in the life of the church. The Roman Catholic Church has much to learn from this insight given that women have very little influence in the church. On the other hand,

⁶²⁰ Notwithstanding the internal debates of the Anglican Communion regarding the ordination of women, as a rule the Anglican Communion does not in principle find objections to the ordination of women. Hence, while it leaves the decision as to whether or not to ordain women to its member churches, the Communion itself affirms the validity of ordaining women for all its member churches.

the Roman Catholic tendency to subordinate orthopraxis to orthodoxy calls attention to the need to examine and take recourse not only to one's present situation but also to the churches diachronic unity with the past when bringing the living tradition to expression in belief and practice.

Conclusion:

The ecumenical dialogue between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church at the level of identification is confined to dealing with ontological and phenomenological claims that arise out of exaggerated dispositions. A symbolic disposition, however, seeks to enter the space between the positions arrived at by the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church in order to uncover points of intersection that, while not resolving, ignoring, or dismissing the ultimate positions of both communions, can provide resources for receiving and learning from the ecumenical, who, despite all disagreements, brings the mystery of God to expression.

Ecumenical reception and learning are developed develop and uncovered in the symbolic space between orthodoxy and orthopraxis. Simply put, the Anglican concern for orthopraxis and the Roman Catholic concern for orthodoxy can potentially provide resources for both communions. For instance, the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion need not come to full agreement ontological or phenomenological agreement in order for reception and learning to occur. However, as the above acknowledges, the space for receptive ecumenism and the ecumenical learning is not imposed by the ecumenical other. It is a space that is created by one's church for one's own church. The establishment of such a space however, requires the cognitive and narrative dispositional resources of the symbol.

CONCLUSION

The contemporary ecumenical landscape is fraught with new challenges and possibilities. The preceding study is rooted in the conviction that these challenges and possibilities are brought into clearer relief when one considers them from the context of the fundamental mysteries of Christianity as the origin and goal of Christian belief and activity that are brought to expression by particular churches. The preceding study undertook the development of a symbolic approach to the ecumenical relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and Anglican Communion in several steps.

Firstly, it was necessary to acknowledge the general contours and limits of Western thought and theology in regards to the relationship between unity and difference. It was argued that the various cognitive constructs employed by Western thought and theology to interpret and appropriate the relationship between unity and difference tend to reduce the reality of mystery to either a problematic reality in need of a solution or a reality that is utterly beyond human reason. The Western difficulty with mystery is particularly evident in regards to contemporary Western commitments to ontology or metaphysics on the one hand and phenomenology on the other hand. Ontology and phenomenology are characteristic of a thinking that is governed by a logic of the one over the many and the many over the one respectively. The common thread running through contemporary Western thought and theology is the dependence upon criticism. It was maintained that in light of modern and postmodern commitments the ecumenical activity between Christian churches in the West suffers from a deficiency of cognitive and narrative resources that are necessary for interpreting and appropriating the complex reality of mystery. Thus, the tendency in Western thought to interpret and appropriate

mystery as a problem in need of a solution or as a reality that escapes human reason ultimately places unnecessary limits on God and human reason respectively. It was argued that properly comprehended the interpretation and appropriation of mystery are activities that are postcritical insofar as mystery extends beyond the boundaries of critical patterns of thought.

Secondly, it was suggested that Karl Rahner's theology and in particular his theology of symbol provide postcritical resources for interpreting and appropriating the realities of unity and difference; not as mutually exclusive, but instead, as mutually enriching. The central theme of Rahner's theology is the reduction to mystery. For Rahner, the mystery of human and Christian existence is animated by God's holy mystery. Rahner demonstrates that as spirit-in-the-world human existence is characterized as self-related otheredness. As such, human experience is always transcendental insofar as the human being's encounter with the mysterious other brings forth human questioning and knowledge. It is the radical openness to God's infinite mystery within the finite and concrete circumstances of the world that ultimately gives rise to human existence for Rahner. According to Rahner, all beings are symbolic. Being achieves its nature by entering into its own other so as to express itself. However, being is not only expressive, but being also realizes itself in its own other. Hence, the symbolic nature of existence, for Rahner, is governed by both a process of emanation and return and unity-in-difference. Every being expresses itself in own other, but every being also returns to itself through its own other. Thus, all finite beings are in the process of becoming.

Thirdly, it was argued that the need in the West for a second or symbolic *naïveté* extends to ecumenical dialogue. Paul Ricoeur's philosophy of recognition provided a basic structure from which a critique of the contemporary ecumenical landscape in the West could be undertaken. It was shown that the ecumenical goal of mutual recognition necessitates a movement from recognition as identification to recognizing one's-self. It was argued that the traditional strategies employed by ecumenical dialogue (distinctions, synthesis, and a phenomenology of difference) have likely run their course. Thus, the ability to recognize one's-self is ultimately a question of one's own identity having been confronted by the mystery of the other. It was maintained that the constructive appropriation or reception of the ecumenical other requires resources that extend beyond the critical attitudes of modernity and postmodernity. Ecumenism is often construed either as a movement that seeks to establish mutual recognition between churches through a conformity characterized by "substantial agreement" or via a "comprehensiveness" that overlooks or tolerates difference for the sake of unity. Mystery, however, is properly interpreted and appropriated as a reality that is infinitely knowable. As such, the logic of the one over the many that characterizes Western ontological and metaphysical thought and the logic of the many over the one that characterizes Western postmodern phenomenological thought cannot provide sufficient resources for an ample interpretation of mystery within ecumenical dialogue. Rahner's theology of ecumenical dialogue and his theology of symbol were developed as resources for overcoming the contemporary ecumenical log jam by reframing ecumenical concerns using Rahner's logic of symbol and in so doing provided postcritical resources for rethinking ecumenical dialogue.

Fourthly, some of the significant social, theological, and historical developments of the ecumenical relationship between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church were considered. It was demonstrated that the Anglican preoccupation with comprehensiveness and the Roman Catholic fascination with unity were important factors in developing how both communions have come to interpret themselves and one another. Anglican comprehensiveness is supported by phenomenological patterns of thought that are sensitive to diversity and cautious of unity while Roman Catholic unity is supported by metaphysical and ontological patterns of thought that are sensitive to visible unity and cautious of diversity.

Lastly, a symbolic approach to ecumenical dialogue was brought to bear on the ARCIC dialogues. It was maintained that a symbolic rethinking of the relationship between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church requires both a cognitive and narrative conversion. Hence, the challenge confronting the present day ARC dialogues is one of reception. Put as a question, “how can the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church receive one another in responsibility and charity?” It was maintained that both communions are in need of a cognitive and narrative conversion that is characterized by the dynamism of the symbol and rooted in the humble recognition of one another as real expressions of God’s holy mystery.

The preceding study was primary directed towards developing Karl Rahner’s theology as a resource for fostering the movement of the ARC ecumenical dialogues from methods of identification towards methods governed by a logic of symbol. Hence, the primary focus of this study was concentrated on the need for a paradigmatic shift towards new ways of approaching ecumenical dialogue symbolically. However, the

proposed symbolic paradigm for rethinking how the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church engage and receive one another is not an end in and of itself, but is a moment along the path towards mutual recognition. Hence, this study affirms the sober reality that the goal of mutual recognition is not an immanent reality for the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion. How mutual recognition between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic will come about is uncertain. What is certain, however, is that it will not be established and maintained simply through conformity. What has been proposed is the possibility for a new beginning for the dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion; a second *naïveté* whereby the energy, enthusiasm, goodwill, and hope that directed and animated the initial stages of dialogue between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic can be reinvigorated in a new context.

It is evident as ARCIC III begins to delve into the complex differences and commonalities that exist between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion that a humble and honest appraisal of the challenges and possibilities of mutual recognition must be assessed. However, the more immediate need is an honest and humble appraisal of what can be done at present. It is appropriate and somewhat ironic that this study ends by recalling the prophetic and instructive words of the 1968 Malta Report of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Preparatory Commission regarding mutual recognition. The Preparatory Commission writes, “[w]e cannot envisage in detail what may be the issues and demands of the final stage in our quest for the full, organic unity of our two communions. We know only that we must be constant in prayer for the grace of

the Holy Spirit in order that we may be open to his guidance and judgment, and receptive to each other's faith and understanding."⁶²¹

While the preceding study was limited in scope to the relationship between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church, the ecumenical framework that was developed has implications that extend into the ecumenical relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the Churches of Eastern Orthodoxy. In particular, the symbolic framework that was developed in the preceding pages has the potential provide a renewed ecumenical space between Catholic and Orthodox that draws together the mystical and pneumatological disposition of the East with the ontological and Christocentric disposition in the West.

⁶²¹ Anglican-Roman Catholic Preparatory Commission, "The Malta Report (1968)."

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